

REDHILL AERODROME CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

DRAFT - Minutes for the meeting of the Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee Members, held on the 22nd April 2026 at 10.30am, hybrid meeting

PARTICIPANTS:

Gareth Owen (Chair)
Graeme Lafferty (CEO, Redhill Aerodrome Ltd)
Nick Stagg (Chairman, Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Ltd)
Catherine Baart (Earlswood & Reigate South)
Jonathan Essex (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
Jim Blackmore (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council)
Richard Fowler (Tandridge District Council)
Chris Hoskins (Nutfield Conservation Society)
Nikki Taplin (Cubair)
Emi Verzani (Bletchingley Parish Council) via Teams
Louise Barrett (Secretary)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Paul Murray (Krag)
Paul Cole (NPAS)
Patrick McIntosh (Outwood Parish Council)
Leigh Curtis (KSSAA)

2. INTRODUCTION - Gareth Owen, New Chair

Gareth Owen (GO) introduced himself as the new Chair and gave insight into his background. Everyone introduced themselves around the table and on Teams.

3. AGREE AND ADOPT DRAFT MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (18 NOVEMBER 2025)

Louise Barrett (LB) to add the following statement to the last minutes 'Aerodrome Management have said they will not attend a Public Meeting if one is held'.

Operational Matters:

4. INTRODUCTION – Nick Stagg (NS), Chairman Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Ltd

Continues to be a challenging period and even more pressure added with the rise in fuel prices with the ongoing issues in Iran especially for our business sector. We continue to have vacant space, potentially because the business rates are more than the rent we are charging.

Q (GO) Is there any hope that the unitary council will be able to do anything about business rates?

Jonathan Essex (JE) Business rates are set by central government. Local councils can only look at charities.

(NS) We pay business rates for the runways that we do not use for part of the year. It's when grass runways are not usable which is approximately 6 months of the year, can fluctuate depending on weather. The only way to get around that is if we close ATC.

Graeme Lafferty (GL) SHW are our business rates advisor, and the rates are run off the ATC tower. If the ATC tower is open then it is classed as operational. Only runway 06/24 can be used at that time but there are restrictions on it, set by the local council, 3 runways we can't use. It would save us a lot of money for 6 months, but that would mean getting rid of staff.

(GO) Suggested contacting 2 local MP's to make them aware of this.

(NS) We will write a letter to our local MP's

(GL) Business rates are roughly £90,000 a year just for runways.

(NS) Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance (KSSAA) and National Police Air Service (NPAS) like to have ATC but it's not a requirement and like having fire cover for refuelling.

Catherine Baart (CB) you are effectively paying for KSSAA and NPAS to operate at the airfield by providing ATC, Fire Team and paying the business rates for the runways.

5. UPDATE – Graeme Lafferty, CEO Redhill Aerodrome

The Aerodrome has experienced a long and difficult winter with both weather and external financial drivers adversely affecting the business. Since taking over as CEO and trying fresh approaches to improve the business, rising external cost have meant a challenging time.

Once again business rates are strangling the aviation industry as a whole and is felt more intensely at the smaller end of the market in operations like our own. For the runways alone we pay over £90k per annum which we obviously feel aggrieved about as 3 of our runways are completely inoperable for approximately 6 months of the year and the one runway we can operate from has restrictions. The councils view on this is as long as the air traffic tower is in operation then there should be no relief which begs the question do we close the air traffic tower over the winter months to save this expenditure.

The aerodrome estate including the tenant community pay around £800k in business rates a year, this is not of any value. For nearly 4 months throughout the winter, we have had raw sewage spill across the top end of the estate with a prolonged fight with Thames Water ensuing before any works begun in earnest. The bank of the brook surrounding the property has begun to collapse in areas with the environment agency having very little interest in repairs even after a collapse exposing unknown cables and ducting.

Along with most other small employers we must pay the increased national insurance contributions; this is a tax on jobs. With an increase from 13.8% to 15% this will cost our business approximately an extra £20k a year; a lot of money, that I had wanted to invest in other areas.

I made this committee aware at our last meeting; we have lost a major tenant on the estate which will severely affect the company's bottom line over the next 12-24 months.

This added to price rises in gas and electricity means that the business must pass more cost onto our tenants, increasing their costs and impacting viability.

Through all these changes we have managed to not only maintain a high level of satisfaction across our tenant community and attract new tenants and businesses but also maintain a high degree of safety and compliance within the eyes of the CAA which has been recently proven with impressive reports from external audits and inspections.

As a business we continue to invest in the future of the site and our operations with 2 new ATCOs being trained, 2 new fire fighters and a new SAFO. We have carried out recent repairs of the taxiways running at £30k, the repainting of all taxiways which will begin in the coming weeks costing an additional £15k, extensive repairs to helipads and fuelling areas cost the company a further £30k. This coupled with the upcoming purchase of a new fire tender and the introduction a new CAA approved FID (Flight Information Display) into the tower which will aid in flight ops shows the commitment and drive of the company to continue to maintain the Aerodrome in its current state. In addition, the Company spent £250k on the new roof of hanger 9. The airside company will post losses for the financial year of over £500k which is of course not sustainable in the medium term.

Q Chris Hoskins (CO) Is there a problem with the sewage system?

(GL) the sewage drain burst in 3 different places and it come up through the ground.

(NS) it was only when we threatened litigation against Thames Water that they did something about it.

(GL) The works are ongoing as when they repair one part it collapses at another point.

Q. (JB) Do the business pay their own business rates and is that included in your figures?

(GL) business pay their own business rates. £800,000 is across the estate. £90,000 is for runways alone. We pay business rates on any parts that are not occupied. Recently quoted rent on a hangar and the business rates are higher than the rent.

Q. (GO) Do you have a budget for this year? Are you forecasting another loss? How long can you carry on posting losses?

(GL) yes

(NS) losses are from the aviation business. The cash reserves that we make from the property side of the business are sufficient to see us through the next 12-18 months. Must balance the books carefully.

(JE) asked if Redhill Aerodrome could share how they delt with Thames Water to get them to come out.

(GL) yes, we can share the research and the approach we took.

6. FLIGHT MONITORING REPORT

You will have seen from the flight movement statistics that aircraft movements are once again down. They are 8.6% down on last year's numbers with a fall of 35.4% in a three-year period.

Whilst we can try and absorb the impact of these falling figures we cannot continue operating the aviation business, at a substantial loss, year after year, for years to come. The airfield has very high fixed costs, which we cannot reduce.

There are various reasons for this worrying trend of lower movements.

Climate change obviously has a serious effect on our aviation activities. The evidence is all too obvious. The number of days lost, due to bad weather, when there is no prevailing VFR environment, is clearly on the increase. We don't earn much revenue if aircraft cannot fly.

A shortage of flying instructors has also been a key factor, in reducing movements. This is a "post pandemic" issue and it has curtailed our flying schools' activities, who are a major part of our turnover. This is not going to be fixed quickly.

Private pilots are flying a lot less as everyone feels the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis, being aggravated by increasing costs for fuel.

We are currently working on a few opportunities, trying to attract more aircraft to the Aerodrome especially rotary traffic which provides us with a better income than fixed wing traffic.

On a positive note, you will see from the report that we have only had one flying complaint this year. Our complaints line and email are both working.

Q (CH) Has the flight monitoring report been withdrawn?

(LB) The report that had been withdrawn is unwithdrawn. Will send out again.

Q (CH) How do you get hold of the aerodrome? The telephone number used to be published in the parish magazine.

(GL) The CAA are satisfied as the number is on our website.

(GO) Not the aerodromes responsibility. Someone can take it off the aerodromes website and ask if it can be posted on the template for the parish magazines.

(CH) can look in this.

Q (GO) Are you worried about a shortage of fuel in the future? Are airways making contingencies?

(NS) There is always a possibility. The government are looking into commercial airline needs. Our aerodrome would be quite low down in the order with the exception of our emergency services.

Q for Nikki Taplin (NT), Cubair (JB) What do you think of Graeme's view of the airfield?

(NT) We don't have as much of a shortage of pilots as other clubs as most of our instructors are older, retired from their jobs and don't need to make money. A lot of flying instructors took that route to gain their commercial licence but because of the shortage of pilots they don't need to now and can go straight to the airline for training. You need to do 200 hours to get your CPL, whereas it used to be 1200 hours. Some people we trained have gone off to become commercial pilots and have come back on their days off, but some airlines are quite strict on this and the pilots do not have to make up their hours now. We have always run our business like a club, so we are different to other businesses.

Committee Matters:

7. SUMMARY OF MEETING BETWEEN COUNCILLOR BLACKMORE (SALFORDS AND SIDLOW PARISH COUNCIL) AND NICK STAGG (RAVL) ON 4 MARCH 2026

(GO) Councillor Blackmore and Nick Stagg met, differences and issues were resolved. I attended and it was very amicable and information was swapped on both sides. Any misunderstanding can be put behind us.

Q (JB) Is Graeme now doing what Phil Wright used to do?

(NS) Phil is getting close to retirement age and we need to future proof and distribute his work and time spent. Phil is our only ATC instructor and monitor for 2 new ATC's.

(CH) We would like to record our thanks to Phil for his input to the committee over the years as he has always been very helpful.

(JB) You have to present the last 6 days which is something in the 106 agreement that they will be presented.

(NS) The numbers are included in the calculation it's just they are not visible in that way but all the data is there. Not sure if it says they should be presented. The Section 106 is between the local authority and the aerodrome to maintain a log and ensure there can't be more than 85 movements rolling average over a 7 day period. The number has been checked and is in line with the 106 Agreement.

8. PROPOSED REVIEW/UPDATE OF RACC CONSTITUTION

9. REVIEW OF RACC MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA AHEAD OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

(GO) In the past the Aerodrome have proposed a review of the Constitution. There was a letter dated 22nd April 2025 which wasn't responded to or discussed. Suggestion from the Aerodrome that there should be a 3 year fixed term for committee members, 2 meetings a year, no public meeting and only a constituted body can appoint a representative to the committee. We do have to consider the membership of the committee in view of the local authority reorganisation coming up to change to the East Surrey Unitary Authority which will replace, Surrey County Council, Tandridge, Reigate and Mole Valley. Set up a subcommittee to come up with some proposals that we put to the meeting in November to be agreed or objected. If anyone has any views, they can send these in before the subcommittee meeting is held. This will be a good time to look through the Constitution to see if it's up to date. Nothing will be changed without a majority agreement from the committee. Subcommittee will be made up of Aerodrome Representative – Graeme Lafferty, Parish Councils / Residents representative Jim Blackmore, County Councillor representative – Jonathan Essex / Michael Blacker, Chairman – Gareth Owen, Tenant – Nikki Taplin, Cubair.

(JE) New councillors from April 2027 and parish councils are also elected from May 2027. If it was a 2 or 4 year term and starting next year it would fit in with elections better than every 3 years. Some areas of the Constitution are not as contentious and may need to be brought in line with other aerodrome Constitutions and could be green lighted.

(LB) Arrange subcommittee meeting before November and send constitution out to everyone and ask for feedback.

10. DISCUSSION ON PROS AND CONS OF HOLDING A PUBLIC MEETING IN 2026

(NS) aerodrome would like to discuss public meetings with the new Chair.

(GL) Date was discussed and aerodrome said a public meeting could take place, but aerodrome representatives wouldn't attend. No other aerodrome of our size has a public meeting.

(CH) It will still be the official meeting if the aerodrome chooses not to come. Residents consider that to be the important meeting. Some public are unhappy that issues are raised by us. They get frustrated.

(NS) this committee is set up to have an efficient way for issues in the local community to be communicated to the aerodrome and for us to respond to those issues. People should talk to their local representative for their issues to be raised at the committee meeting not wait for a public meeting. Can we have a section in the agenda for issues raised between meeting A and meeting B from the general public and what the aerodromes response is to that.

(GO) If you are representing a group, like a parish council, you will notify the people of your parish what happens in these meetings. In that notification you can say if you have any concerns about the aerodrome's activities, please contact XX who is your representative on the consultative committee.

(JB) main concern the public have is noise and potential development. The school is affected by the noise.

(NS) Thakeham have a contract with RAVL, if they see an opportunity to pursue a planning opportunity, they can progress this. The point of the RACC is to deal with the aerodrome/aviation issues. If a planning application is made that would go through the official planning process and subject to public presentation and any issues would be dealt with at that level. The aerodrome is partially green/grey/brown belt and there is a requirement for housing in the area.

(JB) If the aerodrome does agree to sell part of the land that could affect operations here.

(NS) It could, it depends on what Thakeham and the Local Authorities agree and then go through a planning process and planning consent granted. If there was planning permission granted on the 75 acres of agricultural land on the other side of the road that wouldn't affect the aerodrome at all. A questionnaire was sent out by the local authority to ask if there was land available. We would only do something if it was commercially viable. Houses are more expensive to build for house builders. When the aerodrome wanted to put in a hard runway that would have transformed its viability and thrived. Now it's too expensive to put in an application and do the work.

(JE) Need to raise profile that this committee exists. Suggest that the café has some information about the RACC, what its function is and what it does. Benefit of a public annual meeting is to raise the profile of the RACC to know that there is an avenue to approach to deal with question they may need to ask. Committee can have a public event if the aerodrome isn't present.

(GO) what does the aerodrome feel about the information gathering of a public meeting?

(NS) No point in having this committee and a public meeting. As a Parish Council you can have your own public meeting and get all the information and bring it to this committee for discussion. If we join the public meeting we will then be talking directly to the public and circumvent this committee. We will continue to attend the RACC meeting's but will not attend a public meeting.

(GO) If the parish councils / county council want to hold a public meeting to gather information to bring to the RACC that is fine. I don't think it's an RACC meeting. Public meeting can be held but it should be called something other than RACC public meeting as the public would expect the aerodrome to be there. Shouldn't rule out a special meeting should one need to occur.

(JE) A public meeting should be held no matter who attends as we should abide by the constitution of this committee until any changes are agreed. Suggestion could be to drop the public meeting from the RACC and insert a joint public meeting in the constitutions of local parish councils.

(CB) requirement for those meetings to have someone from the RACC representative in attendance.

(NS) We have appointed a sub-committee to review the constitution and report back to the main committee on their recommendations.

11. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at Redhill Aerodrome on 18 November 2026 at 10:30am.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(CH) A local resident has complained about aircraft not taking the right flight path and are flying over their farm and spooking the animals. It has been raised for years and still people aren't coming in on the right flight path. Understand emergency services need to go via the quickest route but they should follow the correct path to come back.

(GL) to investigate and see where the farm is on the map and where the flight path should be.

The meeting closed at 12:10 pm