

REDHILL AERODROME CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee held on the 11th May 2022 at 10.00am via Zoom.

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)
Wayne Clark (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council – deputy)
Paul Cole (National Police Air Service)
Jonathon Essex (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council - deputy)
Chris Farr (Godstone Parish Council)
Pat Glenn (Bletchingley Parish Council)
Liam Hammond (Tandridge District Council)
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)
Chris Hoskins (Nutfield Conservation Society)
Paul Murray (KRAG)
Nikki Taplin (Cubair)
Mark Wooller (Outwood Parish Council)

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all attendees, especially Parish Councillor Chris Farr who was attending his first RACC meeting on behalf of Godstone Parish Council.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 23RD FEBRUARY 2022

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Item 7 - Impact of movement cap restrictions on Runway 25

Richard Blain wished to acknowledge that, while the better weather had enabled the grass runways to become operational for the time being, the unforeseen damaging consequences of the movement cap would re-emerge as a critical issue later in the year.

4. UPDATE ON BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AT THE AERODROME

Nick Stagg confirmed that the grass runways were now back in use and that the aerodrome was looking forward to a busy summer for the first time since the pandemic. He was pleased to report that a new tenant had been secured to occupy part of the space vacated by Arena Aviation and that the remaining area was being marketed. He reflected on the adverse financial impact of the Arena Aviation's departure in terms of the loss of both rental and aviation income but concluded that business activities were now moving in the right direction.

David Burke considered that the reduction in the level of enquiries about vacant commercial space at the aerodrome reflected the fragile state of the national economy.

5. FLIGHT MONITORING

The aerodrome manager's flight monitoring report for January to March 2022 was had been circulated prior to the meeting. This comprised movement statistics; complaints by residents about aircraft movements; and references to incidents / accidents.

There were no questions concerning the report.

6. ITEM REQUESTED BY SALFORDS & SIDLOW PARISH COUNCILLOR JIM BLACKMORE

Jim Blackmore had submitted the following agenda item:

"Salfords Primary School [recently] invited members of the Parish Council to visit ... the school is seriously affected by aircraft using the east/west grass runways. We were asked to put the following questions to the aerodrome:

Is it possible to review the height that the planes are reaching when they are over school premises, please? Is the legal requirement being met? We are disturbed by a lot of noise, and we can see the numbers on the bottom of the planes, we do not feel this is being adhered to."

Phillip Wright explained that there was no minimum departure height and that altitudes were affected by several variables. The school was in line with the flight path from the grass runways and overflying was, therefore, inevitable with limited options for mitigation. The situation had also been exacerbated by an increase in fixed wing flying activity and that, when planes take off, they do so under full throttle. Nick Stagg commented that if the unlicensed taxiway could be used as the main runway, planes could depart over the Salfords gap instead, which would avoid over-flying the school.

Jim Blackmore recalled that, years ago, planes taking off from the grass runway did so via the Salfords Gap before a “supposed incident” (not witnessed by anyone on the ground) put an end to the practice. He asked if this former flight path could be reinstated. In response, Phillip Wright clarified that an ‘airprox event’ had occurred which resulted in a CAA investigation. He explained that one pilot had filed the report to the CAA and that the process did not require validation from other parties. He also commented on the risks of fixed wing aircraft flying close to helicopter routes (as would be the case over the Salfords Gap) including the tendency for light aircraft to be affected by drift which was countered by student pilots to varying degrees. However, Phillip offered to revisit the possibility of reinstating the former flight path, although much would need to be done to convince the CAA on safety grounds. Furthermore, any such work would have to be part of a long-term project which couldn’t commence this year due to current staffing shortages affecting the control tower. In any event, it would not be practicable for allow only some planes to fly over the Salfords Gap.

Jonathan Essex asked if aircraft nose measurements were taken, especially from planes flying at low altitudes. Phillip Wright stated that previous noise studies had been undertaken in connection with planning applications and that the results had not been sufficient to constitute grounds for refusal. He acknowledged that, regardless of noise, seeing low flying aircraft overhead could also be unsettling. Jonathan asked if the aerodrome could release recent noise reports.

Richard Blain gave his own account of an ‘airprox incident’ in which he was involved and supported the view that use of the taxiway would solve the problem of planes over-flying the school. He suggested that the school be invited to visit the aerodrome via the Pilots’ Hub. Jim Blackmore also proposed that aerodrome representatives should offer to visit the school.

7. QUESTIONS FROM SURREY COUNTY COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BAART

Catherine Baart had submitted the following questions and had asked them to be put to the meeting by Jonathan Essex in her absence:

- (i) What data does the aerodrome monitor on air quality in the residential back gardens around the aerodrome – in Copsleigh Avenue for example?*
- (ii) Please can the position on fuel duty charged for light aircraft be explained. Are the aircraft at Redhill aerodrome using reduced VAT fuel?*

The Chairman stated that, as a general rule, members who request agenda items should be present at the meeting to present them. Indeed, David Burke considered that ‘proxy questions’ were unhelpful and that it was better for anyone submitting a question to be present to explain its context. However, on this occasion, the Chairman was willing for the item to proceed as requested by Catherine Baart (the same applied to the next agenda item requested by Chris Hoskins).

Nick Stagg responded to the first question by stating that it would be impracticable for the aerodrome to install air monitors in residents' gardens. He surmised that, while air quality studies regarding airfields in general had been undertaken, the pollution generated by A23 traffic far exceeded that caused by light aircraft and that it would be difficult to isolate pollution measurements from the aerodrome. Nevertheless, Jonathan Essex asked if information could be made available about the impact of aerodromes on adjacent neighbourhoods such as Copsleigh Avenue. He asked if Redhill could replicate studies undertaken elsewhere and whether monitoring could take place on accessible land a similar distance from the runways.

As far as fuel duties were concerned, Nick Stagg advised that those levied at Redhill were as per the levels imposed by the Government and in line with other aerodromes. Phillip Wright explained that AVTUR Jet A1 fuel purchased for private flying attracted a higher duty for which pilots were responsible for paying. The recent 5p per litre reduction in petrol prices for motor vehicles had not been passed on to aviation; the reduction in duty for AVGAS 100LL was 5% (approximately 1.9p per litre). He also advised that, while various air pollution studies had been undertaken at other aerodromes (grass airfields had been shown to have some positive environmental impacts) the Department for Transport was preparing guidelines about what was expected in terms of air quality measures. He proposed that further consideration about possible air quality monitoring at Redhill should be deferred, pending the anticipated DoT guidance relating to smaller airfields.

8. ITEM REQUESTED BY CHRIS HOSKINS – OPERATION OF THE NOISELINE

Chris Hoskins was unable to join the meeting and had provided the following statement which was read out with the consent of the Chairman:

“The first point of call for many locals, especially the older public, is via the NoiseLine. This was normally published in the Link on a permanent basis but has continually allowed to lapse by either the Aerodrome or the editors. It is essential that the number is readily available in the magazine, as well as on line. My need for the NoiseLine followed a series of overflying events on 18/4 where I was overflown on five occasions at few minute intervals with the plane substantially away from the required flight path broadly east over the M23. The plane was very noisy and at a low level. I have since had an email response on 4/5 explaining that this was apparently a deliberate and not agreed move by a trainer for a new pilot. I am surprised that action was not taken by the control tower after the first circuit and the trainer and pilot were allowed to follow the same route for another four circuits and 30 minutes.”

Phillip Wright gave his account of the incident on the 18th April, explaining that the pilot had since been made aware of the correct flight procedures. Phillip had also attempted to contact the Nutfield Link, but they wouldn't be able respond until the middle of the month. He would pursue the possibility of the aerodrome having a regular feature in the magazine about the NoiseLine, notwithstanding the fact that relevant information is provided on the aerodrome's website and that most affected residents have the number (01737 888123) on speed dial.

9. PUBLIC MEETING - SUMMER 2022

The aerodrome had requested that the ('in person') public meeting be held on a week day evening as it will not be viable for its key staff to be released on a Saturday morning this summer (which is its busiest time of the year). Nutfield Village Hall, the usual venue, had limited mid-week evening availability in school term time but should be available for hire during the summer holidays on most dates from Monday, 18th July.

Vince Sharp clarified that the main purpose of the meeting would be for representatives to speak on behalf of the aerodrome; aerodrome users; and residents (usually either Nutfield or Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council). Members of the public would then have the opportunity to ask questions. Richard Blain and Paul Cole offered to speak under the 'aerodrome users' slot. Discussion took place about possible venues, a preferred start time / date and the potential availability of key attendees.

Jim Blackmore advised that Salfords Village Hall should also be available on Tuesday evenings. Although on-site parking was limited, he thought that most residents in the village should be able to walk to the hall. Richard Blain also suggested Hanger 9 on the aerodrome as a potential alternative venue. Jonathan Essex considered that the meeting should, ideally, avoid school holidays to help enable as many residents as possible to attend. While Phillip Wright might not be able to attend an off-site venue before 8.00pm due to his commitments in the control tower, it was agreed that the meeting shouldn't start any later than 7.30pm and that Phillip could join slightly later if necessary.

It wasn't possible to identify a mutually convenient date or venue. It was therefore agreed that David Burke would advise of evenings that he, Nick Stagg and Phillip Wright would be able to make and that a 'best fit' date and venue would then be selected.

The meeting closed at 11.02 a.m.