

Speaking Notes

HISTORY

- Construction of the airfield commenced in 1937... and frankly hasn't stopped since!
- Extensive use during WWII, bombed on multiple occasions
- HO to USAAF in 1942, subsequently returned to RAF
- Use of a QRF launch base until handover to ACC
- Main operating base for AAC since 1993, initially by units returning from Germany: Gazelle and Lynx

TODAY

- Home of Army's fleet of Apache Attack Helicopter, currently AH64 Mk1 but being replaced by AH64-E model.
- Certainty of WFS now assured, will remain the Main Operating Base for Apache (3 & 4 Regt AAC) and equipment enablers (7 REME) into the future.
- The Aviation Regts are held, in turn, at Very High Readiness to deploy on operations in support of Defence need anywhere in the world, including at sea.
- The dedicated Conversion to Role training Sqn will move to MW in early 22. Continuation and competency flights will stay – just fewer of them!
- Daily population of 2000 – of which @ 480 are Defence civilians and contractors. Dependant population of @ 1200 residing in the immediate and surrounding areas. Growing veteran population of those choosing to stay in the area, post discharge and a significant cohort of RAF vets!
- The Station, in the main, supports and looks after itself under command of Colonel Dave Amlôt, with a "town council" comprising the heads of departments and units.
- We rely heavily on non-Defence core support through nationally let, locally delivered, contracts; hard & soft facilities management, accommodation (housing), water etc....
- As an enduring site recently forecasted to receive (£M's) investment to ageing facilities... we suffer from the deterioration of buildings built over the decades. Cast iron district heating pipes being replaced and new ensuite accommodation block.
- We are a secure site; armed guards and military working dogs patrol.

WHAT WE DO

- The Station exists to support Defence requirement.
- As units are held at VHR, they need to train... some they can do by simulator, but ultimately, they do need to fly – to maintain mandated competence, to avoid skill fade and to train to fight. The Apache is a proved battlefield winner.
- Much of the Apache's operations are conducted at night to improve capability and survivability and this core competence needs regular training in the conditions the crews will be expected to operate.
- We train therefore all over the world in challenging environments; from the Artic Circle to the desserts of Oman, from the furthest point east (within NATO) to the west coast of the US.... But of course, much is done local to home.
- The airfield (runway active hours) is ordinarily open Monday to Thursday from 0900 hrs to 0130 hrs and on Fridays 0900 hrs – 1700 hrs. Flying outside of these hours is generally avoided, but unfortunately this is not always possible, weather, training requirement, restrictions and, currently COVID limitations, mean that we, exceptionally, need to extend into "Out of Hours".
- We have recently commenced communicating OOH flying notifications to the Parish and District Councils and media outlets... you may have seen the recent notification in the EADT covering last weekend?

FLYING OBSERVATIONS

- Helicopters, like aircraft, arriving or departing an airfield have to follow certain CAA and MAA rules... essentially following the centreline of the runway, away from or into the airfield.
- Some ac test flying is done within the boundaries of the airfield, such as when an ac has been serviced... for obvious reasons. If something were to go wrong, we want to be able to get to it quickly and avoid damage or casualties outside.
- Similarly, a lot of flight training involves short duration hops, take-off and landing. These follow a circuit, within the Military Airfield Traffic Zone (MATZ), where we control the airspace. When an ac departs, it will taxi and depart the runway (wind dependant), climbing to 500 ft, before turning 90 degrees right and climbing again to 1000 ft where it will turn right again,

now essentially heading parallel to the runway followed by reverse process to land.

- Exceptionally, ac may fly lower due to adverse weather / visual limitations... few and far between.

NOISE

- No escaping the fact that helicopters make noise and are slower to clear the area (unlike previous fast jets operated by the RAF), therefore the sound will take much longer to dissipate. There is no appreciable difference in noise between Mk1 and E
- Weather conditions impact on dissipation, as does the time of year.. windows open and longer hours in spent outdoors...

AVOIDANCE OF BUILT UP AREAS

- Routes are planned to avoid built up areas, but not always possible to do, weather and other flight traffic may reduce avoid availability
- Routes are varied to avoid concentrations, but not in the Military Airfield Traffic Zone, where the opportunity to do so is restricted.

FLYING MORE?

- In sum, no. The fleet has reduced from 67 Mk1s to 20 (at times less as deployments / fly-aways are taken from this stock), in addition available flying hours have reduced from @ 180 5 years ago to now @ 120 per aircraft. Chris is aware that we have undertaken some data collection work for Jo Churchill in this regard.
- Has Covid had an impact? Yes, the Govt restrictions imposed have constrained fly-away activity, avoiding the risk of having an ac stick on the ground due to isolation / quarantine of crews has meant more localised flying from / to WFS.
- Will the move away of training squadron impact? Yes, as the constant requirement to convert pilots moves away, but Regt'l training will continue.

TRAFFIC ISSUES

- We recognise that our operation impacts on local traffic. We have a published and signed route for all military traffic and heavy construction traffic in place to avoid the village, instead pushing vehicles onto other

routes. Further distillation of traffic is problematic due to the rural road network.

- We advocate all our staff abiding by the local traffic regulations, regularly publishing reminders about the need to observe the restrictions in place, particularly speeding.

Q: Greater use of the school bus would cut traffic volume AM & PM.. does the PC support?

- WE take action against those evidenced to have breached the rules... whilst we may not be able to discipline, we can stop them bringing their vehicles onto the Station.

LITTER

- Not exactly sure what the issue is... grateful for any steers? But, as an active airfield we are on the look out for any Foreign Objects / litter that may cause damage to our aircraft

In summary, we recognise having the largest Military base in Suffolk and with an active airfield on your doorstep may not always be viewed positively by all, but we are here to stay. We aspire to be good neighbours and recognise that there is always room for improvement. Chris has my contact details, which I am happy to share in the minutes. My office may be difficult to access, but my phone and email is always available.

Questions

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