

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-045-2014/15
Date of meeting: 1 December 2014



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development

Subject: The introduction of Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) training for fixed wing aircraft at North Weald Airfield

Responsible Officer: Darren Goodey (01992 564501)
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Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations:

- (1) To authorise officers to enter into a negotiated agreement with The North Weald Flying Group to allow them to commence Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) training for fixed wing aircraft at North Weald Airfield; and**
- (2) Following on from (1) above, to end the moratorium on the maximum term of the lease being which presently stands at four years, for this lease only.**

Executive Summary:

Until April 2010, the ability to learn to fly in a fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft was not possible from North Weald Airfield. This was due to an Air Navigation Order (ANO) that stated that a Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) training could only be undertaken at a licensed airfield. This Order has now been amended to allow such activity. North Weald Flying Group has requested permission to undertake PPL training from the airfield.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To increase the income from the airfield in accordance with Members stated aims.

Other Options for Action:

Not to allow the introduction of fixed wing PPL training.

To allow PPL training but with restrictions.

Report:

- As a result of an amendment of the Air Navigation Order (ANO) in April 2010, flight training for a PPL for aeroplanes with a Maximum Take Off Mass (MTOM) of 2730kg and helicopters and gyroplanes with a MTOM of 3175kg became permissible from unlicensed Airfields such as North Weald.
- This change to the ANO followed the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) consultation with the industry and after analysing the safety record of un-licensed aerodromes. The CAA

concluded that there was no justifiable safety case to restrict flight training in aeroplanes and helicopters under a specified weight, to licensed airfields.

3. There would still be a legal obligation on airfield operators and those conducting flight training to ensure that it has adequate facilities for the safe conduct of flight training such as an air to ground radio service, fire fighting & rescue services.

4. More recently, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Union Aviation Agency (EUAA) have changed the requirements for PPL training which has resulted in allowing only organisations with the status of “Approved Training Organisation” (ATO) to conduct PPL training. This means that individual freelance instructors will no longer be able to carry out PPL training unless they operate under the aegis of an ATO.

5. An ATO is required to draw up a series of manuals regarding its operations. These manuals need to be approved by the CAA before training can commence. They cover Operations, Training, Safety Management and Compliance Monitoring. They are required to have personnel appointed to carry out specific functions such as Head of Training, Chief Flying Instructor, Compliance Monitoring Manager and Safety Manager. They are subject to regular audits and visits by CAA inspectors to ensure that standards are maintained.

Current Position

6. Since the relaxation of the ANO, a number of training providers have expressed an interest in operating from North Weald. The Airfield is attractive to training providers due to a number of factors including the type and length of the runway, the Airfield’s location, facilities and professional reputation within the aviation industry.

7. The only training provider who has applied to use the airfield and who also holds ATO status is the North Weald Flying Group (NWFG) and as such regular dialogue has been held with them rather than other providers.

8. The North Weald Flying Group has been operating from the Airfield for over ten years without major incident as an aircraft rental group. It operates a fleet of four Cessna C172s, a Cessna C150, and a Piper Archer PA28-181. It already carries out type conversion, basic instrument (IMC) training for pilots with PPLs and biennial check flights.

9. The Accountable Manager, Chief Flying Instructor and Chief Theoretical Knowledge Instructor has logged over 22,000 flying hours, including 7,000 hours as an instructor and examiner. Their Head of Training is another very experienced instructor. He is also the Compliance Monitoring Manager. The Safety Manager is a director and manager of The Squadron where NWFG makes use of the facilities for its ground-based training and briefings.

10. The Airfield management team have completed a risk assessment that examines the introduction of PPL training and the findings were such that it is felt that the current resources at North Weald such as staffing levels and fire cover are sufficient. This shows that the airfield could fulfil its legal obligation in providing adequate facilities for the safe conduct of flight training.

11. The major concern is the effect the introduction of PPL training would have on the local community. The introduction of PPL training would inevitably increase movements which in turn could see an increase in nuisance complaints from local residents, however, the Chief Flying Instructor from NWFG has made it clear that only 25% of a PPL training course involves circuit training and that to mitigate concerns they would also use other Airfields at Andrewsfield and Duxford with whom they already have arrangements in place.

12. Initially, NWFG are looking for 1000 movements per annum which equates to less than three per day. Any lease granted will reflect this limit and any excess movements will, in the first instance incur a financial penalty and trigger a review of the lease.

13. There is no intention to permit any type of Commercial Pilots Licence training.

14. Activities permitted by any lease granted as a result of this report would not extend beyond the current operating hours of the airfield.

15. In order to make this business opportunity as attractive as possible and if through negotiation the financial terms of the lease can be maximised by doing so, Members are asked to lift the moratorium on the length of leases (which presently stands at four years) for this lease only.

Resource Implications:

It is proposed that NWFG lease an area of land on the Airfield to position some of their aircraft so there would be an associated rental income.

They would also be granted a Runway License that would permit them to operate PPL training and include a maximum number of movements per annum. It has been suggested by NWFG that 1000 would be sufficient in the first instance but this could increase in the future. The charge per movement would form part of the agreement negotiations.

It is anticipated that the income associated with this activity would be in excess of £5000 per annum.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There would be a need for a contract for the use of the airfield and runway movements to be drawn up.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

Airfield risk assessment.

Risk Management:

A formal airfield risk assessment has been undertaken which indicates that there would be no significant risk should this proposal be implemented.

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

The Airfield has a wide variety of users and due regard must be given to the needs of those users and the general public living near the Airfield.

It is possible that the activity which is the subject of this report may give rise to increased nuisance or annoyance, however, it is felt that the existing statutory powers already available will mitigate any possible problems.

The statutory powers referred to are exercised with due regard to the needs of all the residents of the District.