

**ROCHESTER AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (RACC)  
REPORT 2015-16**

There was one meeting held during the year on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Unfortunately I was unable to attend due to a previous engagement. My report is based upon the minutes of the meeting.

Those present included representatives from Rochester Airport Ltd (RAL), MAPS, Medway Borough Council, BAE Systems, Skytrek Flying School and a local resident group.

**Planning Application Update.** A report was presented by Mr Paul Britten from RAL. A summary follows:- Planning permission was granted by Medway Council on the 4th February 2015.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council were making their decision six weeks later. A day before the TMBC meeting a Judicial Review of Medway's decision was presented to the High Court by a local resident. TMBC decided to pull the application from their meeting pending a High Court decision.

The main grounds for the review were:

1. Treatment of Area of Natural Beauty policies.
2. Breach of EIA regulations.

Before any hearing the application is reviewed by a High Court judge who looks at the validity of any claim. The Judge decided on the 21st May 2015 that 'the reasons can be argued.'

The case was set for the 11th November 2015 and due to the costs involved Rochester Airport Ltd decided against legal representation.

At the hearing new evidence was presented by the claimant leading to an eventual adjournment for a rehearing at an undetermined later date. It later transpired that this rehearing could be at any time up to June 2016.

In January 2016 Medway Council conceded certain grounds and effectively planning permission was quashed. The application now needs to be re-determined.

In the Chancellors 2015 autumn statement Rochester Airfield was granted enterprise zone status. This is a major incentive for Medway Council to push forward the airport redevelopment as quickly as possible.

Medway Council is currently working on the planning application and we are hopeful of some progress over the next few months.

**Airport Managers' Report.** A summary follows:-

From the Watch Log. The airport RFFS was put on standby for various incidents. Rough running engines, a number of landing gear issues, weather standbys. One incident aircraft G-FLIP, the nose leg gave way upon landing with a solo student. I am pleased to report no injuries on any of these incidents.

Noise Complaints: I report 14 questions/complaints, 6 of these are noise complaints since our last meeting.

Airport Security: A couple of fence posts have been broken during the last year down Laker Road. Hangar 3 alarm went off for no apparent reason 04:00 hours 3rd October last year.

Transport Police wanted to conduct 2-night flight operations during November; due to the weather none of these took place. Network rail, policing the railway lines in the South East. In February, Travellers were in the Holiday Inn car park, stayed for less than 4 hours, due to the Holiday Inn Duty Manager.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had a Ramp check day on a visiting aircraft and on another day Ramp checked AV8 last year.

General

Since our last meeting 6 scout/cub groups (90 children given an insight into the Airport, a tour of control

tower and hangars, the tour also included an overview of an aircraft.) With another 6 already planned for this Year.

7 local schools visited, with a total of 160 children. 5 local groups visited with 64 people in total.

2 Kent Fire and Rescue (KFRS) visits to support the ongoing training for KFRS personnel.

14 work experience pupils have been supported by Rochester Airport, with another 11 planned for later in the Year.

Operation Propeller, 7 second world war veterans flew from Rochester in 3 aircraft.

Good Friday spot landing competition cancelled due to poor weather took place on May Bank Holiday, 21 aircraft took part.

Aircraft movements were down in November to date due to weather. Busiest Months being June-August with August being the busiest month of the year.

Air Watch had a number of successful meetings in the airport café and a number of exercises in the local area. A number of ATC squadrons have used the airport for drill and band practice and the 1404 Squadron Annual Inspection last October.

Continuing to support a local group with car parking. (Anne Chapman/Southern Highlanders/Graham Underwood)

Model flying evenings continue to be successful.

September 2016 Jeff Pay from Southend visited for a follow up meeting to see how things are going since the airspace changes.

January 2016 CAA/GASCO Safety Evening with over 100 in attendance.

Army from Maidstone 36, last July had an exercise at the airfield involving 40 staff.

BBC Watch Dog filming at Rochester with reference to Drones.

Southend are consultation on their airspace and new SID's

NATS LAMP project has been implemented over the Rochester area.

Brenden O'Brian Flying Circus visited.

#### **Medway Aircraft Preservation Society Report.** A summary follows:-

Good progress continues with the Short's Scion.

MAPS still have a Merlin Engine in the workshop, waiting to be advised what happens next by the owner. The other two Merlin's have been returned to their owners and one of these will be brought back into use.

Work continues on a couple of propeller blades.

A Pop Joy engine had been found which MAPS have purchased and will be imported from Holland.

Lewis Deal has stood down as MD of MAPS, Phil Cole has taken over this position. Robin Heaps has taken on Phil Cole's role of Company Secretary of MAPS.

The Rochester Bridge Trust grant lasts for a further 3 years.

A question was asked about the Heritage Building. Until the planning has been agreed, nothing more could be done. MAPS are working with the Airport and the Heritage site should follow on once the building works get going.

#### **AoB**

The new Fire Station & Road Safety Site adjacent to the airport that had just been completed at the end of February 2016.

Finally, we hope that 2016 will see the planning application get approval and work started on the development of the airport.

*Nigel Tiller*

*APC Representative*

*May 2016*