



New funding initiative for Air Cadet aircraft needed

The UK Air Cadet organization has given young people initial flight training in gliders and motor gliders for decades, taking many to solo standard thanks to the work of hundreds of volunteer instructors. The last two years has seen a suspension of flying activity due to problems in the management of a maintenance contract.

New proposals have been put forward which mean a significant reduction in the number of training squadrons, airfields and gliders, and the end of the motor glider fleet by 2019.

Whilst the new proposals aim to revive Air Cadet flying, they do so with a much-reduced 'footprint' for the organisation across the country. Travelling time to reach flying units will increase. There will also be a considerable reduction in overall airframe numbers. Lengthy lead times will also be incurred in reforming and retraining the instructor cadre, and are likely to lead to a long term reduction in the number of courses to solo standard.

Former Air Cadets have gone on to serve in large numbers in the Royal Air Force, The Fleet Air Arm and the Army Air Corps. Many have also gone into civilian aviation. The prospect of going solo has inspired generations of young people to be interested by the key subject areas of Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics, (STEM).

These subjects are critical, not only to future pilots and engineers in our armed forces and our airlines, but also to our country's long term future as we seek to rebalance our economy away from a dependence on financial and other services.

If we are serious about 'Winning The Global Race' and inspiring our nations' young people then it is time to look at a new funding mechanism for Air Cadet flying training aircraft that acknowledges current financial constraints in order to make these life-changing and motivational experiences as widely available as possible.

Additional new aircraft are needed, either more 'Viking' Gliders to add to the existing fleet, or a fleet of modern light training aircraft. These should all be operated on the civilian register to achieve operating efficiency and predictable costs. Military involvement would be confined to flight safety, training standardisation and core operating funding. This would re-energise UK Air Cadet flying training, and enable the critical developmental experience of going solo to be the core goal of the training program.

Now is the time to recognize the need for a new partnership funding approach between Central Government, the RAF and the aviation industry, as already used by the Sea Cadet Corps and marine industry to deliver sea training assets, to procure additional new aircraft for the Air Cadets.

Organisations such as our own Livery Company can and do provide gliding and flying training scholarships, but we cannot begin to bridge the gap in the numbers formerly trained by the Air Cadet organisation.

We call for a new approach, and offer to co-ordinate a new form of funding initiative between Central Government, the RAF and the UK aviation industry that could procure an additional, modern training fleet for the UK Air Cadet flight-training organization to make its benefits widely available across the country.

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Master,
The Honourable Company of Air Pilots.

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Notes to Editors:

1. The Air Cadets are a youth training organisation of the Royal Air Force. www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets
2. The Honourable Company of Air Pilots is a Livery Company of The City of London. www.airpilots.org

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