

# Briefings



## And now the good news...



Flybe and NetJets have injected some much-needed good news into the flight training industry, with NetJets announcing a plan to invest €50 million in training and safety programmes over the next five years and Flybe recruiting 16 new pilots for its Q400 fleet.

NetJets is putting €250 million of the money into staff training in order to bolster its commitment to ensure its pilots complete 50 per cent more training than industry standards dictate, each year. This includes an average of 24 hours of simulator training per year, which NetJets says is 50 per cent more than the average for commercial airline pilots.

NetJets has a particularly robust attitude to safety. All pilots enter the company as First Officers regardless of their previous experience. Direct-entry First Officers must have a minimum of 1500 hours and pilots are not considered for an upgrade to Captain until they have 3000 hours. Apart from 24 hours a year spent being grilled in the sim at FlightSafety, its European pilots have specialist sim training to fly into mountain airports like Samedan, Sion, Chambery and Innsbruck.

NetJets Europe now has a total workforce of more than 1,600 and operates over 150 aircraft. Flybe has taken 16 pilots from its sponsored pilot recruitment programme to undergo a familiarisation and induction course on the Q400, making it one of the few airlines to be hiring rather than shedding pilots in the current economic climate.

Flybe's flight training programme operates in

**Above: a NetJets Dassault Falcon 7X at Innsbruck**

conjunction with a number of training schools across Europe including Flight Training Europe, Jerez, Cabair College of Air Training at Cranfield, and Oxford Aviation Academy.

Flybe's Chief Commercial Officer Mike Rutter says: "It's great to know that we have some of the best talent in the industry coming on board to help us to grow the Flybe brand. At a time when other airlines are tightening their belts and feeling the impact of tough trading conditions, Flybe continues to recruit."

Flybe now has 180 routes serving 13 countries and operates from a total of 66 departure points, 35 in the UK and 31 on the continent. ■

## Aviation needs more women

The paucity of women in critical jobs in aviation and aerospace such as pilot, engineer and senior management/director has led to the establishment by the Royal Aeronautical Society of the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Committee with the main remit to encourage more women into the industry.

The new group is the first to be set up in the UK representing women working in all sectors of the industry. It was officially launched on October 16 at the RAeS Women in Aviation and Aerospace Conference, sponsored by Airbus UK.

The group's in-depth report on the situation regarding women in aviation concluded that the industry was missing out on a wealth of talent and creativity because so few women are employed in the key roles. Estimates suggest that fewer than 6% of engineering professionals are female. Government data points to an even poorer representation of women in aerospace engineering, while CAA figures show the number of women commercial pilots stubbornly remains below 4%.

"There are plenty of women working in all sectors of aviation and aerospace. The problem is that the vast majority are employed in the same functions that can be found in any other industry: clerical, administrative, human resources, marketing, public relations and sales," says the report. Women now represent at least 50% of the UK workforce as a whole.

"With the exception of cabin crew, ticketing and sales personnel and administrative staff, the percentage of women working in the various sectors that make up aviation, aerospace and the military seldom exceeds 10% and is often 5% or lower."

Conference speakers included one of aviation's top women, Chris Browne, Managing Director of the UK's third biggest airline, Thomson Aviation; Katherine Bennett OBE, Director of Communications & Government Affairs at Airbus UK; Squadron Leader Nicky Smith, the first woman helicopter pilot in the RAF and the first to command an operational squadron; Marissa Dineen, Managing Director of Client & Market Development, GE Capital EMEA and head of the GE Women's network; and round-the-world pilot Polly Vacher.

Clare Walker, chair of the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Committee, said: "It still shocks us that, nearly 100 years after the first British woman gained her pilot's licence, women are still so badly under-represented in aviation and aerospace. Our new group is committed to change that, but we don't underestimate the scale of the task ahead of us. Despite equality legislation dating back to 1970, many good initiatives, many detailed reports and much debate, the issue is proving a hard nut to crack." ■

## Johnson Trust

**The Amy Johnson Memorial Trust Scholarship for 2010 is once again on offer; it provides up to £2,000 to assist British women pilots progress in aviation. The money may be put towards upgrading from a PPL to a CPL or ATPL, or for CLP or ATPL holders working towards an Instructor Rating, multi-engine Instrument Rating or CRM/MMC Rating. Only holders of a CPL or frozen ATPL issued after June 1st 2009 are eligible for this last. Candidates undertaking an approved professional training course are also eligible for the scholarship.**

**Candidates must be British citizens living in the UK. Closing date for applications is February 28th, and application forms may be had from the Trust Secretary, Mrs M.E. Tucker, 12, Church Lane, Merton Park, London SW19 3PD. Send an sae.**



## Helitech does the business

The rotary-wing sector remains relatively buoyant despite the economic downturn, with more than 4,000 industry visitors going through the doors at Helitech 2009, held at Duxford in September. The figure represented an 11 percent increase on 2007. The biennial show, the biggest helicopter expo outside America, attracted more than 200 exhibitors from 21 countries and has 42 aircraft in the static display.

A number of significant aircraft and equipment orders were announced at the show. AgustaWestland and the Bristow Group signed an agreement for three AW139 medium twin engine helicopters to be used for offshore transport operations. The deal includes options for additional AW139 purchases by Bristows. Rolls-Royce signed an exclusive distribution agreement with AAR for

aftermarket supply of RR300 parts and services – this is the engine Frank Robinson is putting in the R66. Eurocopter announced an order for a new EC135 for the West Midlands Police Air Support Unit, and there were a number of big-ticket announcements in the air ambulance sector.

Sue Bradshaw, the event's Exhibition Director, said: "Helitech 2009 far exceeded expectations, and people in the industry know it is all about capitalising on a route into the sector for all levels of the rotary supply chain. It's also about catching up with customers and contacts."

One of the high-profile visitors to the expo was Sergei Sikorsky, son of Igor, who presented a cheque for \$38,000 to the RAF Museum to go with the Sikorsky MH-53 helicopter the company has donated to the museum.



For those whose forward planning goes beyond the middle of next week, Helitech 2011 will be held at Duxford from 27-29 September. ■

**Top: packing them in - 42 helicopters in the static display at Helitech**  
**Left: Sergei Sikorsky, son of Igor, with oversized donation**

## Recession hits Lydd

Continued uncertainty surrounding the future development of Lydd Airport has forced managers to make cost savings by restructuring its operations, with the loss of six jobs as part of the cutbacks.

The airport has two planning applications before Shepway District Council for a new terminal and a runway extension as part of an ambitious scheme to create a successful regional airport in Kent. The applications are due to be heard in February or March next year with a date yet to be announced by Shepway District Council.

Managing director Jonathan Gordon said he deeply regretted the redundancies but the airport could not continue to sustain the current level of operating losses.

"During the past eight years more than £25m has been spent on the airport project and dozens of jobs were created in the process. However, in light of the current economic climate, I have been forced to take a long hard look at the finances. The slight streamlining of our operations will produce the cost savings that we need to make but I am saddened that it means the loss of six jobs."

Lydd's planning applications are for a new terminal building, capable of handling up to 500,000 passengers a year; the other is for a 294-metre runway extension together with a 150-metre starter extension.

## Bear essentials

What would the CAA say? An Alaskan bush pilot foolishly failed to clean out his aircraft after a fishing trip and a passing bear, thinking there were fish inside, ripped off the packaging searching for a snack. The pilot used several rolls of cellophane and three cases of duct tape to repair the aircraft sufficiently to fly it home. AOPA member Robin Nash, who sent these pictures, says: "I guess if the guy had the form 8430 for the duct tape, got a duplicate check of the work carried out and had a qualified Part 15 EASA inspector sign it off, he'd be OK with the CAA. Whether he'd make it back home might still be open to debate, however..."





## VLJs in the hold

Eclipse has gone under, Dayjet followed it in and there's hardly a VLJ outfit left standing, but the mood at the third annual European VLJ conference in September was surprisingly upbeat. Realism rules – the sector has learned some hard lessons and will be the better for it when the upturn comes, they say.

Clearly, nobody knows how this thing is going to pan out. Speakers analysed the situation differently and offered radically divergent forecasts. Blink's CEO Peter Leiman puts his faith in a homogenous fleet – in his

case Cessna Citation Mustangs – high utilisation – Blink's aircraft aim for 600 hours per annum per aircraft – and strong client relationships. Patrick Margetson Rushmore, CEO of London Executive Aviation, questioned Blink's high utilisation and argued that a hybrid approach enabling a combination of owner/manager and charter usage was the way forward. "The industry expectation several years ago that VLJs would bring low cost business aviation has not happened," he said. "The reality is that while operating VLJs costs

**Left: Embraer Phenom 100 on show at the VLJ conference**

less than operating larger business jets, it is by no means cheap."

However Stefan Vilner, CEO of Cologne-based start up operator JetBird, said saving time, and in particular avoiding arduous airline experiences, was a major business driver. JetBird was planning to launch before the end of this year and has an order in for 59 Phenom 100s.

Not all other manufacturers have rolled over. Hondajet's Sales Director Nicholas Newby confirmed that the aircraft is to start its certification flying in January.

Delegates were told to forget the term 'VLJ' by Aoife O' Sullivan of legal firm Gates and Partners, who said the description is not well received by banks and insurance companies. Perhaps with this in mind, delegates agreed that next year's event should be called Light Jets Europe and will take a slightly different format and focus. ■

## RAF talks to GA

Steve Copeland reports on RAF Wittering's general aviation day

In an age of increasing reluctance on the part of ATC to accommodate GA traffic it was refreshing to be invited to a GA day at RAF Wittering hosted by Station Commander Group Captain Paul Higgins, who is himself an active GA pilot and who flew into the event in a Sky Ranger Microlight, with the intent of encouraging local users to talk to and use military ATC services. The event also gave those who registered the opportunity to fly into RAF Wittering and experience an operational RAF

station. This was taken up with around 40 aircraft taking the offer up. I took the opportunity to arrive in my ex-RAF Auster.

The aims of the day were to enable a frank exchange of view between all users of the Cottesmore and Wittering MATZ, to foster safer coexistence between airspace users, and to give an overview of the RAF ATC services. It also gave the station the opportunity to show off its operational role and give us an understanding of their use of local airspace.

RAF Wittering the former home of No1 Squadron Harriers and 233 OCU is now home to 20 Squadron reserve Harrier unit, formed from the old 233 OCU as well as being an Operational Support Unit for ground forces, with servicemen and women from all three services.

With the exception of parachute operations (which will be at the next event) all sectors of GA were represented, with an interesting presentation being given by a pilot from one of the local gliding clubs. We were given a comprehensive brief by the station Air Traffic Control Officer on the role of the unit and the ways in which they mix local GA with operational fast jet traffic. He explained the flow system used on training flights between the station and the local ranges and training areas.

Following a very pleasant lunch in the Officers Mess we were given a tour of the station. This gave us time in the Harrier Flight Simulator, and a briefing on the Harriers of 20 Sqn, including time in a live cockpit. The day was a huge success with every participant leaving with a better understanding of the way an RAF station operates and the ATC services available to us. For their part, the RAF made it clear that they are keen to talk to us and provide a service. Following the success of this event there will be more events in the New Year with the format no doubt being tweaked as they progress. A big thank you to Group Captain Higgins and his staff for organising a first rate day. I look forward to the next one.



**Top left: Welcome to RAF Wittering, home of the Harrier and friend to GA Above: pilots were given a tour of the base, and of its Harrier aircraft**

## 50 years in the air

On 15th October 1959 Lovat Fraser completed his first solo flight in a de Havilland Chipmunk at Perth Aerodrome during his RAF Flying Scholarship after 8 hours 50 minutes of flying training. He gained his PPL a week later on completion of the 30-hour course. 50 years later Lovat is still flying, now from Dundee Airport with Tayside Aviation, the company he formed with two other aviation enthusiasts as a hobby in February 1968. Although he sold the company and retired as Managing Director and Chief Flying Instructor in May 2007, the new owners have retained him on a part time basis as Director of Flying, including teaching qualified pilots to be flying instructors. As Lovat is the only Tayside Aviation instructor approved by the CAA to conduct this training, he is flying five and sometimes six days a week, taking courses of two students through the six-week course, which requires 30 hours of flying.

Although he is approaching his 69th birthday Lovat still enjoys flying instruction, and being involved with the company he formed and helped to grow to be the largest

flying training organisation and light aircraft maintenance facility in Scotland. The company has operated as many as 24 aircraft, employs over 60 staff at Dundee and at Glenrothes airport, where it also owns and runs the Topsy Nipper licenced restaurant. The company has been continuously involved in training air cadets through the RAF Flying Scholarship Scheme (FSS) since 1978, and has been the sole UK contractor for the FSS since 1994. A new contract to train 150 air cadets per year for four years was awarded last April. Tayside Aviation also provides private and commercial

**Below: Lovat Fraser of Tayside Aviation, a pilot for half a century**



pilots License training and aircraft rental.

When not flying powered aircraft, Lovat teaches air cadets to glide at 662 Volunteer Gliding Squadron at Royal Marines Condor Arbroath. He has been gliding with 662VGS since 1960 and was the CFI and then the CO of the VGS before becoming Wing Commander of Dundee & Central Scotland Wing Air Training Corps. He is believed to be the oldest gliding instructor in the Air Cadet Organisation and has logged over 12,500 glider launches in addition to over 5000 hours powered flying.

Lovat says: "I'm very fortunate still to be flying productively and also to be involved in Tayside Aviation which I am delighted to say is continuing to grow, and recently invested in an Alsim full flight simulator for Instrument Rating and MCC training. My only slight regret is that flying almost every day means there is hardly any time for golf."

Lovat's son Craig flew the Tornado F-3 in the RAF and now flies A340s for Virgin Atlantic. Lovat was awarded an OBE in 1994 for services to the Air Training Corps, was a recipient of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators Sword of Honour, the Air League Scott Farney Medal and is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. ■