



Perth spreads its wings

*Commercial flight training and university research are just a few of the innovations transforming Perth Airport, as **Graeme Hammond** reports*

Major changes in flying training facilities and a unique partnership between the airfield owner, the airfield operator and the local flying club are set to establish Perth (Scone) Airport as Scotland's premier general aviation and flying training centre.

Following collaboration on two major air shows, the Morris Leslie Group, which owns Perth (Scone), ACS Aviation Ltd, the airfield operator, and the Scottish Aero Club are working closely to promote its importance and economic value to the aviation community, local businesses and the general public.

The three organisations already collaborate on the Perth Airport Consultative Committee to connect with

local authorities and community groups. Their joint long-term aim is to encourage greater use of the airport.

Perth (Scone) is already on the path to becoming Scotland's principal flying training base following some exciting new developments and, for the future, it will provide a complete range of courses, from private to commercial and instructor pilot training, in fixed-wing aeroplanes, helicopters, gyrocopters and three axis and flex-wing microlight aircraft.

ACS Aviation Ltd (ACS), which also provides maintenance facilities on the airfield, has entered into collaboration with Air Services Training (AST) to provide commercial pilot training. Under this arrangement AST, which has provided

aeronautical engineering courses at Perth for the past 51 years, will deliver ground school instruction and ACS will provide flight training. This will be known as the PATH (Professional Aviation Training in the Highlands) programme.

PATH is claimed to be the most cost-effective and structured pilot training in the United Kingdom and benefits from the fact that AST is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Perth College. The College, which now has university status, is also developing a research capability, with such items as turbine engine test facilities, wind tunnels and a flight simulator, all to be based within the AST training hangar area at the airport.

Alan Falconer, who has recently taken a controlling interest in ACS, is also bringing his 'Leading Edge' training organisation at Cumbernauld, near Glasgow, under the ACS private pilot training umbrella at Perth – although Leading Edge will continue to operate at Cumbernauld.



**Above: Perth airport's facilities include two hard runways and a grass strip
Right: a Scottish welcome from piper Calum Brown for Chipmunk pilot Declan Curtis
Top right: David Martin flies his flexwing around the snowy city of Perth**



Flex-wing microlight training has also been revitalised with the arrival of Bill Davis, who has returned to Perth from Zambia where he has been a flex-wing air safari pilot for the past two years. During this time Bill made 4,500 sight-seeing flights over the Victoria Falls. Bill has joined Jim Houston to form the Scottish Microlight Centre, which will also deliver three-axis microlight training using the Scottish Aero Club's Evektor EV-97 Eurostar aircraft and operating out of the Club's premises, along with a new gyrocopter training facility being provided by Club member Kevin Whitehead.

In addition, Kingsfield Helicopters will continue to offer a complete range of helicopter services from Perth from *ab initio* through to commercial and flight

instructor courses, and provides helicopter charter services for tours, aerial surveys, photography, special events, golf and air taxi.

As part of the measures to encourage greater use of the airfield, the Scottish Aero Club has entered an agreement with the airfield operator to reduce the landing fee for microlight aircraft (from £15 to £12 - with an introductory landing fee for microlights of £8 for August and September 2011) and to offer a £25 Affiliate Pilot membership of the Club to pilot members of other United Kingdom flying clubs. This will entitle visiting pilots to a ten percent discount on landing fees and a free 'out-of-hours' indemnity, in addition to discounts on a number of products negotiated by the Club for its members.

The Club is also establishing a junior membership scheme, aimed at encouraging the next generation of members and pilots. The intention is that junior members will be able to attend Club functions, feel a sense of belonging with the aviation community, receive mentoring and have the opportunity to fly with members.

The Club already provides the Scottish base for Skywatch, the civil air patrol charity, which provides air search, air observation and air to ground imagery for the emergency services and other agencies. It is also the regional affiliate of AOPA, providing a stronger voice for general aviation in Scotland.

As part of the measures to promote the airfield, the Club held a fly-in on Saturday 27 August. Pilots from all parts of the United Kingdom and the Continent were invited to visit Perth and to see for themselves the range of services that are available. Local councillors and members of the public were invited to visit the airfield during the fly-in to get a taste of the flying training facilities that are on offer.

For more details on what's going on at Perth, see the Scottish Aero Club's website at www.scottishaeroclub.org.uk ■



Air displays and fly-ins are major attractions at Perth

