

What is Royal Air Force Halton's airfield used for?

Royal Air Force Halton has a grass airfield with 2 grass runways, and is used by resident flying units; the Royal Air Force Gliding and Soaring Association, the Royal Air Force Halton Aeroplane Club and the Royal Air Force Halton Microlight Club. The aircraft that use the airfield are mostly gliders, both powered and non-powered, light aircraft, microlights, and a small number of visiting aircraft. It is also often used by other military aircraft on training exercises.

What is the purpose of the different flying units that operate from the airfield?

All the flying clubs operated from RAF Halton's airfield exist for the purpose of allowing affordable flying to MOD personnel of any rank, age and experience. The clubs also accept civilian members, but this is dependant on the amount of members at the time of enquiry. The clubs are as follows:

The Royal Air Force Gliding and Soaring Association (Chilterns Gliding Club) operates on a voluntary basis to aid the development of military personnel through gliding, both winch and aerotow.

The Royal Air Force Halton Aeroplane Club's (HAC) purpose is to afford the opportunity of learning to fly at the lowest practical cost. It operates numerous aircraft types, is self-funded, and allows a small percentage of membership to civilians who can offer valuable assistance. HAC also provide the Junior Ranks Pilot Scholarship Scheme to non-commissioned personnel who win the scholarships.

Royal Air Force Halton Microlight Club's purpose is to provide affordable flying and flying training. Like the Halton Aeroplane Club, it is self-funded; it also provides Air Experience Flights to RAF Recruits and pilot scholarship training for Air Cadets.

Are any of the flights recreational?

The vast majority of flying from Royal Air Force Halton is for instructional purposes, mainly for serving military personnel. The over-riding theme for all the Royal Air Force Halton's flying units is to instil a sense of air-mindedness in our people.

Is the airfield used for any other purpose?

The airfield facilitates other support functions for RAF Halton. It is also the base for a small number of non-flying units, the Royal Air Force Association Club, which is a charity organization focussed on the welfare of Service and ex-Service personnel and their families. The Airfield is also used for command and leadership training for Royal Air Force Non-Commissioned Officers in preparation for duty on operations. Other activities may be authorised with the prior approval of the Station Commander.

Are there limits to the number of flights that can occur?

The airfield has a Ministerial-mandated limit of 16,300 powered aircraft take-offs per calendar year. In addition, the Station Commander has 'restricted' the amount of aerotow activity during the weekends to a maximum of 4 flights per day or up to 8 total per weekend. This is not to be exceeded without the express approval of the Station Commander.

Why are there no concrete runways, air traffic control tower, or perimeter track?

Royal Air Force Halton airfield has been used for powered flights for many decades, and the runways have passed the initial test to assess their suitability for C-130 Hercules aircraft. Maintenance is conducted all year round to ensure the surfaces are kept in the best possible condition. There is no need for an air traffic control tower, as Halton operate an air to ground information service that is similarly operated at most General Aviation sites throughout the UK. There is also no need for a perimeter track; indeed, some of the largest UK airports do not have them.

Does the airfield cater just for military aircraft and personnel, or can civilians with no MOD connection use it?

It is possible for civilians with no MOD connection to utilise Royal Air Force Halton, if the landing is in an emergency, or providing they have prior permission from the Station, are willing to pay the requisite landing fee, and are in possession of the correct documents.

Regulations

Does the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have effective regulatory control over flights from MOD airfields?

All Royal Air Force military airfields are required to comply Military Aviation Authority (MAA) regulations and, where applicable, CAA regulations and the Air Navigation Order. When aircraft operate from Royal Air Force Halton that would normally operate to civilian regulations, we insist that they operate to the more stringent regulations, whether that be military or civilian. When an aircraft leaves Royal Air Force Halton Air Traffic Zone, it is the responsibility of the qualified pilot to adhere to and comply with these rules and orders. The Royal Air Force is extremely safety conscious in all its operations, whether it is in defence of the United Kingdom or in training. Royal Air Force Halton personnel involved with the operations or management of flying activities from Royal Air Force Halton would not permit known unsafe practices to be carried out within their sphere of influence.

How is adherence to regulations monitored?

Each of the resident flying units is inspected on a regular basis by its higher authority to ensure standards are met and maintained. Royal Air Force Halton monitors compliance in accordance with the Royal Air Force Halton Flying Order Book, the contents of which are approved by the Station Commander. The Operations Squadron has day-to-day responsibility for compliance, and the Airfield Duty Instructor monitors compliance on his behalf, both during the working week and at weekends.

Can I see a copy of the Royal Air Force Halton Flying Order book?

A copy of the Royal Air Force Halton Flying Order Book is available online.

.

Aerotows (Tugs)

Why do you use aerotows rather than winches to launch the gliders?

The use of aerotow aircraft affords conventional gliders the opportunity to spend more time airborne; this is ideal for the fluidity and concentration of instruction, and has been proven to benefit students learning the art of safe flying. The use of aerotow is therefore the most cost-effective and dependable method for launching gliders when considering the type of training required, the duration of the courses, and the time available for training. There are also mandatory elements of training which cannot be carried out at the height achieved with a winch launch, for example spin training.

Is it not true that winch launches are cheaper than aerotow launches?

Winch launches cost, on average, £4 to £5 per launch. A flight from a winch launch can only guarantee flight duration of approximately 4 – 5 minutes. Although aerotows are more expensive, on average £20 per launch, they can achieve flight duration of 25 – 30 minutes, thus providing a more effective training environment.

Aerotows use a trailing rope. What risks does this pose to the areas over-flown by the tug aircraft?

The Gliding Club has fitted retractable cables to its aerotow aircraft to minimize hazards caused by a trailing rope.

What steps have been taken to ameliorate aerotow operations?

The aerotow aircraft used are fitted with noise reduction measures such as a 4-bladed prop. Flight paths are also carefully stipulated to avoid as far as possible, the least populated areas, although actual flight paths are dependent on the wind direction and other flight safety considerations. A ROTAX Falke has been acquired, which uses a new generation of quieter engine.

Noise Abatement and Safety

What are the Noise Abatement Turns made by Halton aircraft?

The Station Commander specifies that, wherever possible, Noise Abatement Turns are in place to ensure that aircraft depart over the least-populated areas, thereby reducing the impact on the local residents as much as possible. Copies of the flying circuits have been supplied to members of the Local Area Forum, which includes representatives of County, District and local Parish Councils.

What was the response to the noise survey conducted by Aylesbury Vale District Council in March 2006?

The survey report was assessed by the Royal Air Force Centre of Aviation Medicine. The review concluded that the noise levels were not high enough to warrant concern over the possibility of hearing loss or serious environmental impact, but did acknowledge that the noise levels were high enough to be an annoyance and that flight paths should be reviewed to minimise disturbance. This is done on a continual basis, although complete avoidance of some local villages is not feasible if safe flying operations are to be maintained.

Why do aircraft occasionally 'cut their engine' immediately after take-off?

As an essential part of their training, student pilots are required to practice their Engine Failure after Take Off procedures; this is a requirement of the CAA and the Royal Air Force Central Flying School. Pilots performing this procedure do not 'cut' out their engine, but reduce the throttle setting to simulate an engine failure. Once the training has been successfully completed, the instructor will engage full throttle to climb to a safe height. This procedure is only carried out under the direct supervision of a trained and fully qualified instructor.

Are over-flights of surrounding villages prohibited?

There are specific prohibitions concerning over-flights of villages contained within the Air Navigation Order Rule 5 – Low Flying, which states that no aircraft should fly less than 1000 feet vertically clear of any structure within a built up area. However, Rule 5 does not apply when aircraft are taking off or landing. Nonetheless, we have instigated procedures to ensure that, where possible, over-flights of surrounding villages are kept to an absolute minimum.

What is the minimum clearance/safe height for flights by powered aircraft and aerotows over residential properties and dwelling houses, and how can this be enforced?

Pilots of civilian registered aircraft are required under the Air Navigation Orders to remain at least 500 feet clear in all directions of buildings or people unless in the process of taking off or landing. Royal Air Force Halton has procedures in place for aircraft based at Halton so that any contravention of either CAA or Royal Air Force regulations will result in disciplinary action being taken against the pilot concerned.

What safety precautions are taken by aircraft using Halton airfield to avoid accidents over residential areas and major roads?

Where possible, all departures from Royal Air Force Halton route over less densely populated areas and remain within a safe gliding distance of suitable landing areas.

General Information

What are the operating hours for the airfield?

The operating times of the airfield vary seasonally but are roughly 8.00am to 8.00pm in the summer and 8.00am to 5.00pm during the winter; although, circuit flying is only authorised between 9.00am and 6.00pm. In addition, the Station Commander has imposed a restriction on circuit flying at the weekend between the hours of 12.30 and 1.30pm. All times may be modified in exceptional circumstances when approved by the Station Commander.

How do I complain about flying at Royal Air Force Halton?

Please refer to the Flying Complaints section, accessed through the Flying Info pages.

Where can further details be found on the flying activity at the airfield?

Royal Air Force Halton's Website contains details of all the Station's flying units, aircraft movements, flying statistics and an operational diary.

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafhalton/>