

Helicopter Liaison Group Newsletter

Community and Governance Committee

17 September 2026
Appendix CG078

 **ROYAL
AIR FORCE
SHAWBURY**

Edition 2
2026

RAF Shawbury Helicopter Liaison Group Newsletter for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Parish & Town Councils

Introduction from the Station Commander RAF Shawbury, Wing Commander Paddy Durnin



Welcome to our second newsletter of 2026. In this edition, we report on one of our key community and safety engagement events, namely Landowners' and Horse Rider Awareness Day. We also continue the safety theme, reporting on our latest Drone Awareness Day. In terms of community events, we were delighted to host the CEO, along with staff and pupils of The 3-18 Education Trust, as they signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant plays a vital role in ensuring Service families can access local services with parity, given our transient lifestyle. There is a common theme in all of the articles, which is that RAF Shawbury feels both incredibly proud and lucky to be part of the Shropshire community. Much of this

starts with the support we receive from yourselves as Town and Parish Councils, which is second to none. We hope these newsletters continue to provide useful updates to you of our activities. As always, my main message is to underline my thank you for everything you do in support of RAF Shawbury and to invite you to reach out to us if you have any questions, or indeed if there is anything you think we can help with.

Landowners' and Horse Rider Awareness Day



This event is held annually to show our appreciation to local landowners who allow No.1 Flying Training School access to their fields and clearings. This provides a wide variety of locations and terrain in which trainee aircrew can develop the essential flying skills they will need as they progress onto flying operational aircraft for the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force. Local horse riders are also invited to raise their awareness of the benefits of wearing high visibility clothing, such that our helicopter crews can see them earlier

and take appropriate avoidance action wherever possible. RAF Shawbury's 'Be Seen, Be Safer' Horse Rider Campaign is now replicated across UK military helicopter units. This year's event in May saw the British Horse Society, RAF Safety Centre and Joint Aviation Command represented. As a fitting finale, all of our visitors were treated to a close-up view of the one of the first jumps of the season by the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team.

Armed Forces Covenant Signing



RAF Shawbury hosted an Armed Forces (AF) Covenant signing in June by The 3-18 Education Trust. Prior to the official signing between David O'Toole (CEO of the Trust) and the Station Commander, our guests were invited to experience some of the world-class training which is delivered at RAF Shawbury. Our visitors included Shropshire Council AF Covenant personnel, and the headteachers, staff and Service family pupils from local Trust Schools, Thomas Adams Secondary and Hodnet Primary. The Station Commander said,

"Education is always one of the first thoughts for Service families as we face frequent moves. We are particularly lucky that both schools represented today have an excellent understanding of the support required by Service parents and children. By signing the Covenant, the CEO is underlining the commitment of the Trust across all of their schools, for which we as a Service community are very grateful."

STEM



Our STEM team have been very busy over the summer period, delivering sessions at secondary and primary schools across the county. They have also hosted schools at RAF Shawbury, including Mereside Church of England Primary Academy, Shrewsbury in July. Here, the pupils had the chance to put their skills and STEM knowledge to the test, as they experienced our air traffic control and surveillance simulators. There was also the opportunity to see one of our Juno helicopters up close and learn how they fly. The day concluded with a group photograph in front of RAF Shawbury's Wessex Gate Guardian, before a very tired set of pupils and their teacher returned home.

Post Aerodrome Operating Surfaces (AOS) Completion

As mentioned in March's edition 1, the aerodrome was handed back to Station by the contracting team on completion of the AOS programme last December. The impact and transition back to normal operations for No.1 Flying Training School was quite seamless with shiny

new surfaces, lighting and markings making it feel like the AOS Program was a distant memory. However, as part of the Strategic Command Plan, RAF Shawbury is also committed to providing Diversion availability to other military bases in the local area, including RAF Valley and RAF Cosford. This is in case any of their aircraft require to divert to Shawbury in an emergency, refuel or to practice approaches. The process of integration of visiting Fixed Wing and Rotary Wing aircraft has been a slower process, with the unit required to ensure Regulatory compliance against the multiple Regulating Articles published by the Military Aviation Authority (MAA). Those that live in the local area will know that the Unit was able to receive foreign aircraft from the French Air Force, namely the Rafale, in support of the RAF Cosford Airshow weekend. The Station is now in the 'final' administrative throws to enable receipt of different types of visiting aircraft. In July we were cleared to accept the Chinook fleet, and we had two visiting aircraft in August. It is important that RAF Shawbury ensures it is well placed to receive other air assets, but equally important is that we are safe and meet with regulation requirements. We will look to keep communities informed via our social media channels of different types of aircraft using RAF Shawbury in the coming months.

Drone Awareness Day

On 7 August, we held our second Drone Awareness Day at RAF Shawbury, under the theme, 'Shared Skies, Shared Responsibilities.' The event brought together twenty drone companies from across Low Flying Area 9, showcasing a fascinating range of drone applications: from pet search and rescue, to filming, photography and crop spraying. The day was a great success, featuring insightful talks from the RAF Safety Centre on how irresponsible drone use can jeopardise aircraft safety with some worrying



examples and video clips. Shropshire Fire and Rescue also shared how drones are proving invaluable in assessing fires and planning effective responses. It was particularly rewarding to hear directly from drone pilots about ways we can collaborate more effectively. Attendees had the opportunity to experience low flying through our simulators, gaining a real sense of how challenging it can be to spot drones from the air. The key messages, 'Flying a drone? Pick up the phone' and, 'Hear us around? Get on the ground' highlight the importance of communication to ensure everyone can safely share the skies.

Whether you want to notify us of a planned flight, report unusual activity, or simply ask a question, we're always happy to hear from you. Contact us on 01939 250351 Ext 7163 or email SHY-OPS@mod.gov.uk.



Fly safe, fly legal, and enjoy the skies, there's plenty of room for all of us if we work together!

Our Contact Details

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