

Open Report on behalf of Executive Director for Communities

Report to:	Economic Scrutiny Committee
Date:	29 October 2013
Subject:	RAF Scampton Feasibility Study

Summary:

This paper provides a summary of the findings of the RAF Scampton Feasibility Study recently completed for Lincolnshire County Council and The Royal Air Force by Focus consultants.

Actions Required:

It is recommended that members:

Note the findings of the Feasibility Study and support the proposed next step actions.

1. Background

Royal Air Force Scampton is one of six operational RAF bases in Lincolnshire. Situated in West Lindsey the base represents one of the largest concentrations of employment in that district, with somewhere in the order of 800 jobs (military and civilian) being supported. The base is one of the oldest (due to celebrate its centenary in 2016) and perhaps one of the most famous within the RAF's portfolio (as the original home of 617 Squadron the Dambusters).

The future of RAF Scampton within the RAF has been uncertain for some time. The base is currently home to three operating units, the most high profile of which is the RAFAT (the Royal Air Force Aerobatics Team) better known as the Red Arrows. The future of this world famous display team has also been the subject of much debate at a national level. Whatever the outcome of this debate, the display team will be faced with a degree of change between 2018 and 2020 with the withdrawal from service of the Hawk T1 aircraft. Any reduction in the number of operational units housed at RAF Scampton in the future would call in to question the longer term viability of the Station as an operational base.

Were the RAF to withdraw from RAF Scampton and close the base, there is a real risk that Lincolnshire could be left with a legacy of a community within former military housing, with no supporting facilities, located adjacent to a large tract of

brownfield (potentially contaminated by aviation fuel) land and derelict and decaying buildings.

This potential scenario has led to a desire amongst Lincolnshire's local authorities to develop a contingency plan which could be enacted if base closure became a reality.

Conversations with senior officers within the RAF have identified that there is a great deal of affection for RAF Scampton as a base within the RAF, but that the current financial climate requires that all branches of the armed forces seek to save costs and drive for efficiencies.

This affection for the base within the RAF has enabled us to move from purely seeking to develop "an in case of closure plan" to a joint Feasibility Study commission that encompasses the following elements:

- How could the base (its ground and air space) be reused if the RAF were to withdraw either later this decade or at some time beyond this in the future.
- How could shared military / civilian use of RAF Scampton be developed so as to deliver reduced operating costs for the RAF and thereby make the base more tenable to them whilst at the same time increasing its contribution to the Lincolnshire Economy.
- To raise the level of debate about the future of RAF Scampton within RAF High Command, The Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the MOD.

Following an extensive tendering exercise, Focus Consultants (with Purcell Architects, RDC Aviation and TGA Comms Ltd) were appointed to deliver a feasibility study. The brief for the study is appended.

A three stage approach has been used by Focus.

Stage 1- To develop a Baseline Report which identifies:

- Stakeholder opinions and aspirations for shared use/ redevelopment
- Comparator information
- The current use of buildings within the base and their condition (limitations and opportunities)
- Other limiting factors

Stage 2 - Detailed options testing with stakeholders

Stage 3 – Develop the preferred option looking at: development phasing, capital costs, potential visitor market share, operational models and likely revenue account, in order to present a well worked up viable proposal.

The Findings

The Baseline Report developed through Stage 1 of the commission identified that the potential for increased airspace use on a joint military / civilian basis was not

feasible given the requirements of RAFAT. This effectively ruled out the option of developing the base as a commercial or leisure aerodrome alongside RAF use.

The level of usage of buildings on the site was found to be low with a number of 1960's / 70's accommodation blocks, the former motor pool and one hangar in particular not being used. Of the unused buildings, only the Hangar is listed and could not therefore easily be demolished. Clearance of other buildings to facilitate new build was found to be feasible.

The stakeholder group (which included the Executive Director for Communities, Chief Executive, Leader Of the Council, Executive Councillor For Economic Development, and Executive Councillor For Heritage and Culture plus RAF representatives) articulated to the consultant team that their desire was to create a mixed use site at RAF Scampton which could either stand alongside continuing RAF use or be upscaled in the future to replace any withdrawal of the RAF.

The background story to RAF Scampton identified that the base has a rich heritage which is only exploited in a small way at the current time. The stakeholder group felt that this should be the seed which is grown, with the aim of establishing an aviation focused attraction of national and international importance.

It was also proposed that space which wasn't required for the continuing RAF presence, and didn't naturally lend itself to use as part of a heritage centre could be used for leisure purposes (such as the former officers mess where conversion to a themed hotel was proposed) or office accommodation for occupiers that would sit well alongside RAF or Heritage attraction use.

Stage 2 of the study, tested the market potential of the proposed uses at various scales and also looked at complementarity. Through this exercise it was confirmed that a large heritage attraction of national or international importance would sit well alongside continuing RAF use at Scampton and could be grown further should RAF space requirements diminish in the future. Conversely if the RAF's space requirements at the base were to increase, this could still be achieved with a national scale heritage attraction in place.

The final stage of the study identified that the establishment of a national or international scale aviation heritage attraction based on two or three of the existing listed hangars plus a new exhibition hall was likely to cost in the order of £80m to establish.

Focus have suggested that if desired a phased approach to development could be pursued, based around delivering (at phase 1) a World War 1 attraction within one hangar with additional supporting structures, for 2016 (the centenary of Scampton as an air base). This would enable the development of an increased aviation heritage tourist market, whilst construction of the larger offer (based on two hangars plus a major new exhibition hall) is underway and scheduled for delivery by 2018.

The consultants have identified five key stories that could be told through the site: The First World War, The Dambusters, Coldwar Standoff, The Red Arrows, Aircraft

Innovation In Lincolnshire and a frequently updated exhibition focused on "fly-in" exhibits e.g. BBMF).

The viability assessment included in the feasibility study indicates that a development of the scale proposed could, with the appropriate operational management methodology, deliver a small annual operating surplus based on approximately 200,000 visitors per year (from a market of 7.1 million potential visitors) once phase 2 opens. This level of visitor numbers would be comparable with the performance of attractions such as The National Space Centre (Leicester) and The National Forest Attraction "Conkers", higher than Lincoln Castle but lower than Belton House.

RAF Response To The Feasibility Study

The RAF has been fully involved in the development of the feasibility study through the significant input of time and knowledge by the current base commander. The higher levels of the command structure have also been kept apprised of the emerging proposals and have throughout voiced their "comfort" with what is being proposed. The RAF is currently producing a base Masterplan for RAF Scampton, which will articulate their future operational requirements. It is understood that the process of undertaking the jointly commissioned feasibility study has led to consideration of a potential longer term requirement for RAF Scampton as an active base possibly with increased numbers of force personnel on site. This possibility can well sit alongside the major Heritage Attraction as proposed by Focus in the Feasibility Study.

2. Conclusion

The Feasibility Study prepared by Focus presents a credible model for the development of a major new aviation heritage attraction at RAF Scampton which could sit alongside the current scale of military use and would be sufficiently flexible to work with greater or lesser RAF presence.

The aviation heritage attraction would tell key stories relevant to Lincolnshire and its involvement in defence and aviation. It is likely to attract significant new visitors to the county, generating sufficient revenue to support long term operational sustainability of the attraction, plus spend in the local economy.

To continue to develop the project it will now be necessary to socialize the feasibility report with potential grant funders and private sector investors, whilst continuing to support the RAF in developing an operational masterplan for the base that reflects the heritage centre proposal. Lobbying of the DIO and MOD are considered critical next steps to obtaining formal agreement to pursuing a joint military / civilian usage of the current base.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Consultants Brief
Appendix B	Feasibility Executive Summary and visuals

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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