

**PART 1.6 – CONVENING AUTHORITY COMMENTS**

1. I am content that the Panel have conducted a thorough and objective Inquiry and I accept their Findings and Recommendations. I am also content that the actions of the crew, both before and after they became aware of the accident, were suitably professional. My role in reviewing the Report is to draw the key lessons together and highlight the most important areas to everyone involved in Air Safety, with the aim of preventing recurrence. The extant requirement for military low flying training in the UK Low Flying System and the prevalence of horses and riders across the System means that, inevitably, the two will come into, sometimes close, proximity. The British Horse Society reports that more than 4 million people rode horses in the UK in the year to Feb 11 and that there are an average of over 4 horses/sq km in the UK. Awareness by both aircrew and riders, conspicuity measures, aircrew and rider training, and sensible planning will help mitigate the associated risks, but they cannot remove them completely, not least when the behaviour of sentient animals cannot be predicted, or guaranteed.

2. It is probable that, in the circumstances, all that might be considered reasonable has already been done to reduce the associated such risks. Nevertheless, I concur the recommendation that the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff examines whether and how planned military low flying activity might be made more visible to the horse riding community. Electronic planning aids and communication means are continually evolving and there may now be further potential to provide information on, particularly unusual, helicopter training to members of the public in a form and with sufficient timeliness that can inform their decisions on when and where to ride. Indeed, I suggest that it may now be time for ACAS to review the wider actions taken by the Air Staff in response to HM Coroner's Rule 43 letter following his Inquest into the death of Mrs Heather Bell in 2003, with a view to determining whether there are any further mitigating actions that are now viable.

3. I would like to take this opportunity to both commend and thank the injured party for her assistance with this Inquiry and for her stoical response to this deeply unfortunate accident.