



Ministry of Defence

Air Command Secretariat
Spitfire Block
Headquarters Air Command
Royal Air Force
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Ref. 2015/03665

29 April 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 28 March 2015 providing further clarification of your request, following your emails of 17 January 2015 and 8 February 2015. You requested:

- 1. Are light aircraft flights from RAF Benson permitted directly above the town of Wallingford?*
- 2. How many circuit flights from RAF Benson occur on weekends (maximum and average would be helpful). You defined circuit flights as: 'any flight that leaves and returns to RAF Benson on the same day'*
- 3. What proportion of light aircraft circuit flights from RAF Benson on a weekend are for training a) Full time RAF staff, b) University Air squadron, c) Air cadets?*
- 4. In the RAF in general, what proportion of air cadets go on to take up a full time career or part time career in the RAF?*

You refined your request for questions 2, 3 and 4 to cover 2014.

I have completed a search of our records and I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence holds some information in the scope of your request.

With regard to your first question, this information is already available in the public domain and is therefore exempt under s.21 of the Freedom of Information Act as the information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means.

Wallingford falls within the RAF Benson Military Aerodrome Traffic Zone (MATZ). RAF Benson is responsible for the safe operation of aircraft within the MATZ and RAF Benson aircrew abide by the guidelines set out in the Defence Aerodrome Manual. Whilst aircraft operating out of RAF Benson are allowed to fly over Wallingford, the station is aware of the potential for disturbance and has voluntarily agreed to not fly below 1500 feet when over Wallingford (see Annex H of the Aerodrome Manual found here: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/RAFbenson/flyinginfo/aerodromemanual.cfm>).

In relation to questions 2 and 3, the requested information is provided in the attached table.

Turning to your question 4, In the calendar year 2014, around 20 per cent of Regulars and 10 per cent of Reservists who joined the RAF had previously been members of the RAF Cadet Force, the Air Training Corps.

The number of Air Cadet members will change throughout the year and therefore there is no particular figure that is representative of the number of cadets in 2014. However, a figure of 33,590 as at 1 April 2014 was published as part of Government statistics here:



https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314795/uk_reserve_force_cadets_2014.pdf.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA the Ministry of Defence has a duty to provide advice and assistance. Therefore I have included additional detail in relation to your questions as below:

The flights column of the table records all the weekend flights that both departed and returned to RAF Benson. These flights consist of aircraft from Joint Helicopter Command, Air Experience Flight, University Air Squadron, Air Ambulance, civilian police and other civilian aircraft.

The Weekend Aircraft Movements columns show the breakdown of flights that both departed and returned to RAF Benson, using the categories you specified in your request. Consequently, the total number of these movements will not add up to the number in the flights column as the categories do not cover all aircraft.

Finally, I note that you would like to draw a comparison between the number of individuals joining the RAF who had previously been in the Air Cadets and the total number of Air Cadets. However, I would like to stress that the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO) is not a recruiting organisation. While some cadets do choose to join the military, the training provided by the ACO is held in high regard by civilian employers too and there is no pressure on cadets to consider a Service career. The aim of the ACO is to promote and encourage a practical interest in aviation and the Royal Air Force among young people; provide training which will be useful in the Services and civilian life; and encourage the spirit of adventure and develop qualities of leadership and good citizenship.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Air Command Secretariat

