

## **RESTRICTED – SERVICE INQUIRY**

### **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. My role in reviewing the Report is to draw the key lessons together and attempt to highlight the most important areas to everyone involved in Air Safety, with the aim of preventing recurrence. In this regard, and given the chronological proximity of the occurrences, I am obliged to reprise the main points in my earlier comments on the Report of the Service Inquiry into the Chinook ZH898 and horse rider occurrence on 25 Aug 11. 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, on occasions the two will come into, potentially 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 all that that might be considered reasonable in the circumstances has 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, military aircraft training to members of the public in a form and with sufficient timeliness that can inform their decisions on when and where to ride. The practicalities of applying additional protection to equestrian establishments over and above that which are already in place also warrant examination. However, with reportedly well over 10,000 equestrian establishments of varying size acknowledged in the UK, I do not underestimate the challenges in attempting to do so, balanced with the need to train UK Armed Forces.
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 understanding and considerable dignity in her response to this deeply unfortunate incident.