

24 February 2009

**RAF LYNEHAM UPDATE FOR PILOT AREA BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2009 AT 1900 HRS IN PURTON VILLAGE HALL**

The Air Force Board has directed that all RAF air transport and air-to-air refuelling assets be consolidated in one location at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. The purpose of this consolidation is to increase the effectiveness of our military operations, to secure the long-term future of our core RAF sites and to create a single centre of excellence for operations of this nature.

RAF Lyneham's aircraft assets and resources will be relocated to RAF Brize Norton during 2011, at which point Lyneham will begin its drawdown. This initiative is known as 'Future Brize', a relatively new project title which has superseded the original title of 'Project CATARA' (the **C**entralisation of **A**ir **T**ransport and **A**ir to air **R**efuelling and associated **A**ssets).

There has been considerable speculation regarding Future Brize, both within the military community and in the wider public arena, but several parts of the project remain very much in transition and will not be finalised for a little time yet. However, contrary to the speculation of some, this centralisation of Air Command assets will happen, and attentions at RAF Lyneham are no longer centred on what will need to be done if the closure takes place, but instead are focused on how we can now work effectively to best manage the relocation and closure while supporting those who work here, their dependants and families.

To this end, the planning process is well underway and involves a dedicated team of officers from both Stations and Air Command. It should be emphasised that decisions and timelines for this project are not yet fixed and will be subject to change depending on the infrastructure, logistical and operational requirements at the time. At present, a plan of action is being developed between the two sites, which will incorporate a series of milestones involving the ongoing development of RAF Brize Norton with the concomitant drawdown of services at RAF Lyneham.

While many of the internal practical and logistical elements of the move have been agreed in broad terms, much is still unknown or has yet to be finalised. Nonetheless, please be assured that RAF Lyneham is well aware of the concerns of Councillors and local people who have concerns about the impact that the closure will have on the local area. Therefore, as information becomes available it will be disseminated as quickly as possible.

Project BELVEDERE is a wide-ranging programme that is controlled by the Joint Helicopter Command at Wilton. HQ Land Command is considering a number of sites for development as a Joint Helicopter Command Base, including RAF Lyneham. At present, no decision has been reached on the outcome of the programme report, although we are hoping to have direction by Spring. Nonetheless, in the event that Lyneham is chosen as the preferred site, significant financial investment would be necessary which could result in at least an 18-month gap between RAF Lyneham closing and Joint Helicopter Command taking over.

The RAF Lyneham Community Support Team will continue to work closely with interested parties to ensure that information is disseminated in a timely fashion as it becomes available. In turn, we perceive that this will permit informed community planning for Wiltshire Council and other service providers.

