

LUKE POLLARD MP
Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry

20 December 2025

Dear Tan,

I am providing a quarterly update on the UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS). UKMFTS is a 25-year, £3.8 billion Public Private Partnership, contracted to 2033. The programme delivers aircrew training for all three Services, namely: Fast Jet, Multi Engine, Rotary Wing and Remotely Piloted Air System pilots; and Royal Navy (RN) Rear Crew / Royal Air Force (RAF) Mission Aircrew. UKMFTS includes the provision of all training aircraft, simulators, courseware, instructors, and infrastructure. At any one time there are c.650 trainees in the system, across 20 aircrew specialisations, operating seven aircraft types from six UK sites.

RAF Pilot Holding Times – Crewed Pipelines

The training timelines within UKMFTS continue to reduce, with the Fast Jet pipeline now optimised for trainees completing Modular Initial Officer Training since September 2024. There are currently nine trainees waiting to commence flying training, all waiting fewer than three months. 27 pilots are in the post-Elementary Flying Training (EFT) hold (compared to 41 a year ago and 106 two years ago). Of these 27, there are four Fast Jet pilots (waiting three-months), 22 Multi Engine pilots (waiting 8-12 months) and one Rotary Wing pilot (waiting 2 months).

50 pilots are holding ahead of their front-line Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) training. These comprise of five Fast Jet pilots (waiting 4-6 months), 18 Multi Engine pilots – nine will start OCUs in Q4 (waiting between 4-10 months) – and 14 Rotary Wing pilots, whose thirteen to twenty month holdover is due to Chinook OCU delays and Puma deletion.

RAF Pilot Holding Times – Uncrewed Pipeline

For the Remotely Piloted Air System pipeline, there are 11 trainees in the post EFT hold waiting another 6-20 months pre-OCU; this has been driven by delays to the Protector Programme.

Fast Jet Pilot Training

The Fast Jet pilot training forecast for Training Year 2025/2026 continues to meet the front-line demand via a blend of sovereign training (from Hawk T2) and the international

outsourcing of pilot training to NATO and other partners (US, Italy and Qatar). Noting that the Fast Jet pipeline remains taut, work is ongoing across the UKMFTS Enterprise to address resilience risks. The MOD continues to apply pressure to BAE Systems and Rolls Royce to ensure Hawk T2 availability meets our requirements, while also ensuring that all MOD dependencies (including flying instructors and airfield availability) are in place to maximise the efficiency of the system from an expected uplift in Hawk T2 availability in 2026.

In line with the Strategic Defence Review intent to replace the Hawk T2 with an Advanced Jet Training (AJT) system as soon as possible, requirements for the optimisation of the Fast Jet training pipeline remain in development. The MOD has stood up a Programme Team, and the preparation of a Strategic Outline Business Case is ongoing to assess future options and to define the full requirement. The MOD is aware of several potential platform solutions to replace Hawk T2 and all industry engagement will continue to be conducted in accordance with Government Procurement Policy.

Combat Edge Programme

The RAF Directorate of Flying Training is leading the development of the Combat Edge Human Performance Optimisation Programme to enhance the effectiveness of UKMFTS. The programme encompasses a comprehensive transformation of trainee selection and development, with the aim of delivering aircrew who are better mentally and physically prepared to operate in increasingly complex and contested environments. The programme will initially target Fast Jet pilot training, where failure rate and resource to sustain are currently highest, to increase efficiency, improve output numbers and reduce the dependency on outsourcing training. Subsequent tranches of Combat Edge will maximise the use of technology-enhanced learning, as well as analysis enabled by Artificial Intelligence to provide data-driven individual training plans. The cultural reset and holistic coaching transformation will aim to minimise re-fly rates for failed sorties, while enhancing first time pass rates and improving the war fighter qualities of aircrew delivered to front-line Operational Conversion Units to improve front-line readiness. Combat Edge is a critical enabler to the delivery of the replacement AJT and the Future Flying Training System.

NATO Flight Training Europe (NFTE)

Launched in 2020, the NFTE High Visibility Project is a multinational initiative to link up and coordinate military flying training resources across member states. Having joined in 2023, the UK remains fully committed to NFTE, with all UKMFTS RAF Flying Training Schools now accredited as NFTE Training Campuses. The UK is currently in the Chair role for the NFTE Steering Board. There is a significant demand from NFTE member nations for Rotary Wing pilot training, with the UK able to meet a large proportion of the demand using spare Rotary Wing training capacity at No. 1 Flying Training School, RAF Shawbury. As of 1 Dec 25, the UK is close to finalising RW training provision to Poland, Germany and Norway amongst other partners for 26/27 – gaining significant leverage for the UK. The NFTE programme also aims to cohere member nations' unmet training demands and explore the potential collaborations with Industry to increase training capacity where the investment case is evident. The UK will assess whether this is a viable option for inclusion in the Future Flying Training System.

I want to assure the Defence Committee that the MOD remains committed to ensuring UKMFTS meets our current and future front-line requirements for world-class aircrew.

I trust that you find this information useful.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke', written in a cursive style.

LUKE POLLARD MP