



NEW GROUP TO TACKLE SHORTAGE OF WOMEN IN AVIATION AND AEROSPACE

London – October 9 2009 – The paucity of women in critical jobs in aviation and aerospace such as pilot, engineer and senior management/director has led to the establishment by the Royal Aeronautical Society of the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Committee with the main remit to encourage more women into the industry.

The new group is the first to be set up in the UK representing women working in all sectors of the industry. It is to be officially launched on October 16 at the RAeS Women in Aviation and Aerospace Conference, which is being sponsored by leading aircraft manufacturer Airbus UK.

The conference will also be the launch pad for the group's in-depth report into the current situation regarding women in the industry. It concluded that the aviation and aerospace industry was missing out on a wealth of talent and creativity because so few women are employed in the key roles in the industry.

Estimates suggest that fewer than 6% of engineering professionals are female. However, Government data points to an even poorer representation of women in aerospace engineering, while CAA figures show the number of women commercial pilots stubbornly remains below 4%.

“There are plenty of women working in all sectors of aviation and aerospace. The problem is that the vast majority are employed in the same functions that can be found in any other industry: clerical, administrative, human resources, marketing, public relations and sales,” says the report.

Britain's aviation, aerospace and defence industries are of vital importance to the economy, both in terms of contribution to GDP and employment, but their success is heavily dependent on ensuring that the appropriate skills and workforce are in place.

The report brings this into sharp focus by saying “Skills shortages remain a critical issue, despite the effects of the recession, as the aerospace sector is in competition with its suppliers and other engineering industries for a shrinking pool of potential employees.”

The report argues that all the available statistics prove beyond reasonable doubt that although women represent at least 50% of the UK workforce, they are severely under-represented in most sectors of aviation, aerospace, defence and the military.

“With the exception of cabin crew, ticketing/sales personnel and administrative staff, the percentage of women working in the various sectors that make up aviation, aerospace and the military seldom exceeds 10% and is often 5% or lower.”

The report also highlights a serious shortage of female directors in aviation and aerospace companies, noting that several female non-executive directors have been brought in for their expertise in other markets and other disciplines, but no female pilot or engineer has yet made it to the boardroom.

One of aviation's top women, Chris Browne, Managing Director of the UK's third biggest airline, Thomson Aviation, is to be the keynote speaker at the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Conference. Other speakers include Katherine Bennett, OBE, Director of Communications & Government Affairs at Airbus UK; Squadron Leader Nicky Smith, the first woman helicopter pilot in the RAF and the first to command an operational squadron; Marissa Dineen, Managing Director of Client & Market Development, GE Capital EMEA and head of the GE Women's network; and round-the-world pilot Polly Vacher.

The Conference is also being supported by its exhibitors – Airbus UK, Lockheed Martin, the Defence Engineering and Science Group, British Women Pilots' Association, the UK Resource Centre for Women in SET and the WISE Campaign.

Clare Walker, chair of the Women in Aviation and Aerospace Committee, concluded: "It still shocks us that, nearly 100 years after the first British woman gained her pilot's licence, women are still so badly under-represented in aviation and aerospace. Our new group is committed to change that, but we don't underestimate the scale of the task ahead of us. Despite equality legislation dating back to 1970, many good initiatives, many detailed reports and much debate, the issue is proving a hard nut to crack."

RAeS President Mike Steeden said the Society was proud to have launched the UK's first group dedicated to increasing women's contribution to aviation and aerospace. "Once the Society began organising conferences focusing on women of achievement in aviation and aerospace, it became clear to us that we had to find a way to harness all this talent for the benefit of industry as well as our Society."

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Notes for Editors:

1) See Conference Programme attached. The Report can be downloaded through the following link:

http://www.raes.org.uk/cms/uploaded/files/Women_in_Aviation_and_Aerospace.pdf

About the Royal Aeronautical Society

The Royal Aeronautical Society is the world's only professional body dedicated to the entire aerospace community. Established in 1866 to further the art, science and engineering of aeronautics, the Society has been at the forefront of developments in aerospace ever since.

The Society promotes the highest professional standards in all aerospace disciplines and is a key provider of specialist information on aspects of aerospace. In addition the Society acts as a central forum for the exchange of ideas and plays a leading role in influencing opinion on aerospace matters. There are currently 17,000 members of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 100+ countries. Members meet regularly via the Society's network of 60+ Branches and Divisions. Over 180 companies and organisations have become Corporate Partners of the Society while the Society also features 24 groups focusing on specialist areas with the aerospace industry. Every year the Society holds 400+ conferences, lectures and events.

For more information visit www.aerosociety.com or contact Clare Walker, Chair, RAeS Women in Aviation and Aerospace Committee Tel: 020 8763 2922

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