

Can we save the IMC? Yes we can!

The prospects for the future of the IMC rating are looking marginally brighter as politicians and regulators in Britain and across Europe begin to realise just how vital it is to general aviation and how badly pilot safety will suffer if it is killed off.

There has been a massive response to AOPA's request for members to write to their MPs and MEPs seeking a reprieve for the rating, which will die in April 2012 if nothing is done. The response, particularly in the Europe Parliament, is very encouraging.

- In Britain, at a meeting organised and attended by Shadow Aviation Minister Julian Brazier MP, the new Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority Andrew Haines confirmed to AOPA's chief executive Martin Robinson that it is official Authority policy to retain the IMC rating.
- EASA is to look at methods by which the UK could retain the IMC rating for use only in UK airspace. Talking about the IMC rating,

the Chairman of EASA's Board of Management Mike Smethers told the BBGA conference in March: "Maybe we have to investigate ways in which we can retain some degree of national variation within an overarching set of rules."

- Conservative Euro MPs are united in backing Conservative Transport Spokesman Jackie Foster MEP and Timothy Kirkhope MEP, who as well as being leader of the Conservative Group in Brussels is a PPL with an IMC rating, and who wants to find a way forward which would preserve the IMC rating.

Safety win

The Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC) rating is a fantastic safety win for Britain, better than anything available elsewhere in Europe, better than anything the Americans have got. It teaches low-time pilots to maintain control of aircraft in cloud, and to

get their aircraft safely back on the ground. In 50 years of successful operation it has saved the lives of countless British pilots. It is one of the major reasons why Britain's GA fatality rate is so much lower than elsewhere in Europe and America, despite our changeable weather and challenging maritime climate. AOPA's accident studies, based on figures provided by AOPAs in other European countries, show that while some 90 pilots a year are killed in France in all forms of GA, and about 80 a year in Germany, the figure for the UK is between 20 and 25. The CAA has in the past claimed that GA safety in Britain is four times better than other parts of Europe.

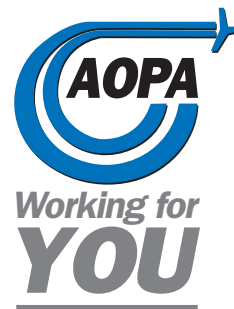
But EASA has never tried to analyse safety rates and to cherry-pick those things which seem to be working from every country. Instead, they seek to harmonise the rules across Europe based on unanimous agreement of every one of the 27 states. While many countries would like an IMC rating equivalent, some are against it – the rating could not be offered in Germany for instance, because flight in IMC is illegal outside controlled airspace. Other countries have been fed wrong ideas of what the IMC rating is and what it seeks to do, and have formed prejudices which seem to be remarkably deep-rooted. And at the moment there is no mechanism by which a national rating can be attached to an EASA licence, which is all that will exist after April 2012 – so after that date, the IMC rating must die if nothing is done. International AOPA maintains that EASA must be freed of the straitjacket that requires it to get an absolute agreement from every country on all ratings. Ironically, EASA does not want to ban the IMC rating and has put some energy into gaining a consensus in its favour across Europe, but they have been unable to persuade everyone.

Martin Robinson says: "EASA is doing some excellent work on flight crew licensing but it needs to be released from the requirement to kill off ratings on which it cannot get 27 ticks in the 'yes' box. Until it can harmonise the weather, EASA should not be forced to demand that we harmonise the way pilots are expected to deal with it; the risk is that we end up harmonising death rates, which would be disastrous for all of general aviation."

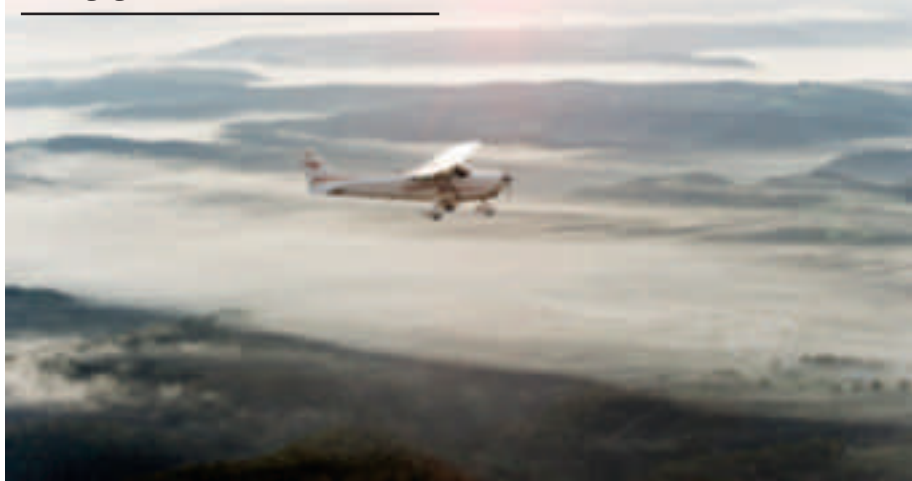
Brussels backing

Political responses to AOPA members' letters have been encouraging, particularly from the European Parliament, where Tory MEPs have been passing letters to Jacqueline Foster MEP, the Conservative spokesman on Transport. Although not a pilot, Ms Foster was airline cabin crew in a previous life and has a good understanding of the issues. Martin Robinson has briefed both Jackie Foster and Timothy Kirkhope on the IMC rating. Replies to AOPA members all contain a section from Jackie Foster saying in part:

"This is an issue that the Conservative delegation in the European Parliament has monitored for some time. I fully understand your concern and am aware that the IMC rating is one of the major reasons why Britain's general aviation safety rate is so much better



Below: Britain's fatality rate is much lower than elsewhere in Europe, despite our challenging maritime climate



8.33 kHz radio spacing is coming

The European Commission has decided to mandate the use of 8.33 kHz radio spacing at all levels across Europe, and is requiring that new aircraft be equipped with this spacing from 2012. Retro-fitting of old aircraft with new radios will begin within eight years, although there is no indication of when the retrofit will have to be completed by. In the interim, radio frequencies will be allocated in such a way that Class D and C airspace will be accessible to aircraft with 25 kHz radios. AOPA's Chief Executive Martin Robinson, who has been in negotiation with various bodies about 8.33 kHz radios for almost 20 years, says: "We have managed to stave off this requirement for a decade, which is something general aviation can take comfort from, but we always knew that ultimately it would be forced upon us. States will have up to 2018 to decide how to apply the retrofit requirement, and it is to be hoped that less expensive 8.33 equipment will become available in that time."

IAOPA has never accepted that 8.33 is necessary below FL195 – it has been mandated above that level since 2007 – because all the frequencies aviation needs could be created through efficiencies by combining all of Europe's frequency allocation offices. NATO has done this, and has found all the frequencies it needs. However, the decisions are being made by those who run the frequency allocation offices. During a Eurocontrol consultation, most stakeholders agreed that the 8.33 mandate should be taken down to the ground – it didn't affect the airlines because they're all 8.33 already, and have passed the cost to passengers. But the stakeholders stipulated that Eurocontrol: "Develop a European Implementation Plan with the participation of all affected stakeholders, also taking into account the issue of funding." Exactly how that 'issue of funding' is to be taken into account is unclear. Martin Robinson says: "They're not going to pay for your new radio, but it may be that they cover some certification costs."

than the rest of Europe.

"As you may already know, EASA Working Groups are in the process of harmonising pilot licences across Europe. This process will come to a close in 2012. While EASA does not want to ban the IMC rating, its aim is to obtain a

European consensus on it. However, I believe that, if it is not possible to obtain a consensus on this issue, the UK must be allowed to keep the IMC rating as a regional difference.

"As a Member of the Transport Committee, I will be writing to EASA, to put forward the case for the retention of the IMC rating as a

regional difference. I will also be writing to the European Commission. Both the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Conservative Shadow Transport department are also aware of this issue and are advocating the retention of the IMC rating. I will also work closely with them to ensure that the value of the IMC is well publicised.

"Rest assured I will continue to monitor the progress of this issue very closely and will participate actively in any debates arguing for EASA to accept the IMC rating as a regional difference."

The reaction from the British government is less proactive. AOPA members are receiving replies from MPs which include a letter from Aviation Minister Paul Clark MP. He takes refuge in the deliberations of FCL008, the EASA Working Group which debated instrument qualifications in Europe, including the UK IMC rating. Mr Clark's letter says in part:

"The draft Implementing Rules did not initially provide for the equivalent of the UK

IMC rating. However, in response to representations from the general aviation community, which were supported by the UK government, EASA formed a working group to review the proposed requirements for flights in IMC by private pilots. The working group comprised of representatives from national aviation authorities (including the UK CAA) and industry. In its review, the group took into consideration the requirements of the UN IMC rating and other regulatory frameworks in place elsewhere in Europe. The group has completed its work and EASA is now considering the group's recommendations. As part of the EASA rulemaking process, it is anticipated that EASA will publish a further Notice of Proposed Amendment for flight crew licensing in the autumn."

The Terms of Reference of this working group, called FCL008, included the clause: 'Review the requirements of the UK IMC rating and other national qualifications for flying in IMC and consider whether there is a need to develop an additional European rating to fly in IMC with less training but also with limited privileges.' FCL008 did not, however, give time to debate the IMC rating but condemned it out of hand before proposing an En Route Instrument Rating (EIR) which would allow holders to fly in IMC on airways, but not to make instrument approaches.

Martin Robinson says: "GAPAN and other organisations have expressed serious concerns about the EIR, but AOPA will take no formal

position on it until we have seen EASA's Notice of Proposed Amendment setting out its plans for instrument flying qualifications. We will not take an official view on something on which there has been no official information at all.

"The situation with the IMC rating is different because we are not concerned with standards, but only with creating a political route through which the rating could be attached to an EASA licence for use only in the UK. That is the thrust of our campaign."

There has been a reluctance to allow states to adopt regional differences because of bad experiences with the JARs, which states were free to adopt or ignore as they saw fit. As a

result, the attempt at harmonisation was a hopeless muddle. But at EASA and the EC, there is a clear recognition that the IMC rating is too important to sacrifice in the name of uniformity. Martin Robinson has discussed

Other countries have been fed wrong ideas of what the IMC rating is and what it seeks to do, and have formed prejudices which seem to be remarkably deep-rooted

the issue with EASA's Head of Rulemaking Jules Kneepkens and others, and there is no doubt that EASA understands the true situation.

Martin Robinson says: "There's no reason why aviation should be subject to enforced harmonisation when other areas are not – they are not, for instance, insisting that we drive on the right hand side of the road. The current situation forces EASA to sacrifice aviation safety to political expediency, and they need to be relieved of that requirement. A simple political input that gives EASA more leeway is all that's required, and we will continue to press for it." ■

Chief executive's diary:

EASA and the 'possibilities'

How flexible can EASA be? On February 16th and 17th I was in Brussels for a meeting with Jules Kneepkens, EASA's Head of Rulemaking. Together with Michael Erb, Managing Director of AOPA Germany, I discussed a number of issues of interest to EASA and IAOPA members – data connection and so forth – and also spoke briefly about the IMC rating. Mr Kneepkens would not formally comment on it, and asked us to wait until the NPA was issued. He did say, however, that "many things are possible in EASA". The main point that I took away from the meeting was Kneepkens' advice that we should all lobby our state representatives on anything we wish EASA to do, rather than what we do not want from EASA.

The AOPA Executive Committee gave the Board members an update on work in progress on February 18th, and the main subjects at issue were the IMC rating and the Ofcom stealth tax. We also discussed membership, and how we will improve the management of our website and database.

February 20th took me to White Waltham for a meeting of the AOPA Members Working Group; we had a number of useful discussions covering

topics like the Mentoring Scheme, the Wings Scheme and AOPA local representatives. On the 22nd I had an informal meeting with Department for Transport security people about European Regulation EC300, which covers security at airfields, and how the UK might deal with the derogation that allows us to choose our own methods of compliance.

Between the 23rd and the 25th I was in Brussels for a series of meetings, the first with a firm of aviation legal experts on European matters coming out of the Commission. The Eurocontrol Stakeholders Consultation Group met for a Mode-S close-out discussion and agreed unanimously that the programme could have been better handled. Eurocontrol claims that the programme achieved its key objectives and say they have learned lessons about programme management and policy. They will continue with airborne monitoring and with future evolution as new technologies develop. Will the lessons learned extend to the universal mandate on 8.33 radios? It has been decided that all new aircraft should be fitted with 8.33 radios from 2012, while retro-fitting of older aircraft should begin in 2018. This is



something I've been trying to stave off for many years, which has saved the industry a certain amount of money and inconvenience; but there was always an inevitability about it.

On February 26th we had a meeting of the DfT's AVSEC security team to discuss the details of derogation from EC300. The regulation becomes law on April 29th 2010, but due to the difficulties surrounding the process it is likely that many states will not be able to comply for some time.

On March 2nd we had the General Aviation Consultative Committee meeting at CAA. The CAA is planning for another Strategic Review, which was referred to as Phase 1, so there may be another shoe to drop after that; watch this space.

On March 3rd it was back to Brussels for a Social and Economic Commission hearing in respect of Air Accident Investigation. The main focus is of course on passengers involved in airliner accidents, and the openness of processes by which accidents are investigated. IAOPA is concerned that general aviation should not simply be lumped together with commercial air transport when legislation is written, and that due consideration be given to the way in which GA accidents are handled. We

EASA – who needs consultation?

EASA is proposing to the European Commission that it be allowed to abandon its system of consultation with industry because it is finding it impossible to deal with the number of critical responses to its rulemaking plans.

The move was revealed at a meeting of the EASA Advisory Body in March, and was met with a unanimously negative response. Martin Robinson, IAOPA's representative on the EAB, said: "It was heartening that those who often have very different agendas – people from Airbus, Rolls Royce, IATA – agreed one hundred percent with us that such a move would be undesirable."

In the interests of efficiency, EASA wants to get rid of the Comment Response Document which accompanies its rulemaking proposals. It has been overwhelmed by responses from industry, with more than 10,000 submissions on some of its plans, and it says it doesn't have the resources to deal with them. Instead, it believes it should listen to the advice of its working groups, then present its proposals to the European Commission. Unfortunately, seeing the mess EASA has got itself into in trying to handle the volume of industry comment, the EC looks like it's being led down the path of agreement.

Martin Robinson says: "They want to move towards a situation in which we effectively have very little say in rulemaking, where industry input is confined to the views of members of working groups, hand-picked by EASA. The UK Department for Transport needs to join in the widespread opposition to this.

asked for additional work to be done to reflect the differences, in order that the right safety lessons be gained from investigations through a 'just culture' approach.

Next day I had a meeting in London with Steven Boyle of the Department for Transport on the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme. AOPA members who operate aircraft above 5700 kg MTOM must be registered for ETS. I spent March 5th with the new CAA Chief Executive Andrew Haines, visiting Wycombe Air Park and Cranfield. Thank you to Tim Orchard and Charles Henry for their support on this, and for making the day a memorable one for Andrew Haines.

On March 8th I met with Bob Stangarone, Vice President of Cessna, to discuss what's happening in Europe – he is confident that the Skycatcher will get EASA certification within the next 12 to 18 months. Next day I went to the BBGA conference in St Albans, where there were a lot of interesting speakers with disparate views about the future. Andrew Haines spoke about the CAA's commitment to more effective engagement with stakeholders. Mr Haines said that with regard to the environment, he would like the CAA to be seen as a source of accurate information and data to help in the achievement of policy objectives. Here, too, the Chairman of the EASA Board of Management Mike Smethers suggested that EASA should perhaps look at allowing

"What people generally don't understand is that there are cultural differences here; consultation with industry is not an established practice in much of Europe, and rulemakers who think they should be imposing regulations sometimes resent industry comment as 'interference'. In Britain, with a few exceptions, we have genuine consultation, backed up by the likes of the Pilling Report and the Hampton Report on better governance, which try to ensure that consultation is a genuine partnership between regulators and industry.

"Elsewhere in Europe, regulation is sometimes made by people who consider

themselves to be a political elite, and who look upon having to amend their proposals in response to industry comment as loss of face. It will take a long time to get over this, but there is no excuse for going back. Yes, it is difficult to handle a huge volume of critical responses, but it is absolutely vital that we do so or we'll end up with the worst of all worlds – a regulator with very little trustworthy data on which to build regulation, who is being leaned on by the EC to change as little as possible, but who is also prey to all sorts of commercial interests.

"EASA could cut down the amount of critical industry response, but only if it gets better data on which to base its proposals, becomes better informed and smarter in the way it develops rules." ■

CAA blocks NATS cash call

AOPA was accused of scaremongering last year when *General Aviation* reported that NATS – now privatised and owned by the airlines – was looking for a financial contribution in the region of £3 million a year from GA for providing radio services outside controlled airspace, but the CAA has now officially confirmed that NATS has asked for money for that very purpose.

To its great credit, the CAA has refused to accede to the request. In the February issue of its bulletin *In Focus*, the Authority says: "The commercial airline community represented in NATS' Customer Consultation Working Group suggested that GA should pay more towards the costs of NERL's services that it uses. (This is NATS En Route Ltd, the subsidiary which provides the services in question). Considering both policy and practical aspects, the CAA's assessment indicates that the creation of controlled airspace is primarily a necessary measure to protect the safety of commercial aviation. Therefore the CAA is minded to conclude that for CP3 all reasonable costs incurred by NERL in providing services under its licence to small aircraft typically used for non-business and commercial purposes should be taken into account in setting the Eurocontrol price control. The CAA does not, in the absence of further arguments or evidence, see a case for establishing a separate Air Traffic Services charging scheme in respect of small aircraft."

regional differences in order to preserve the IMC rating.

I submitted AOPA's comments to AVSEC on March 10th, confirming our belief that derogation was the right way to go and agreeing with them that aircraft weighing less than 15 tonnes are less interesting to terrorists. As is written elsewhere in these pages, we stressed that aircraft below 5700kg posed even less of a risk and proposed that airports with 'paved' runways of less than 1,000 meters should be left to local 'neighbourhood watch' schemes.

On March 11th and 12th I was in Cologne for a meeting of the EASA Advisory Body, where discussions covered EASA proposals to amend the fees and charges formula. This may see large increases for design approvals, and at least a doubling of fees and possibly an increase as high as 93% for some small industries, and of course, this will have to be passed on to owners and pilots in the form of increased charges for STCs and mods. At the same time, certification costs will be reduced. The Advisory Body feels that EASA is trying to recession-proof itself by shifting charges from certification, where there is likely to be little activity in a recession, to more reliable sources of income. Unofficially, EASA also revealed its plans to reform its consultation processes by removing the Comment Response Document. EAB members unanimously opposed this.

On March 16th I met with Jeppessen's

client manager, Cay Roth, to look at some products that can be offered to members, and on the 17th I went to an Aerodrome Operators Association meeting at Southend. AOPA and AOA are examining areas in which we can further co-operate – watch this space. I hadn't visited Southend Airport for some time, and it was good to see the planned development they have in train, and to hear of their commitment to GA. I wish them every success. Then on March 18th I submitted AOPA's response to the consultation on Regulatory Air Transport – thank you to those members who sent me their comments.

On March 18th I have a presentation on AOPA to the Professional Instructors Association AGM at Shoreham, and covered such topics as the IMC rating, EASA changes on the LAPL, the LAFI instructor and so on.

Looking ahead in the diary I see I have an upcoming meeting at the CAA on Performance Based Navigation, which if my definition accords with theirs is all about efficiency in air transport; there's a meeting of the Finance Advisory Committee, I've got an engagement to speak at the mid-Kent strut of the LAA, IAOPA Europe has its Regional Meeting at Friedrichshafen to coincide with Aero, there's the Duxford Bonus Safety Day and a NATMAC meeting in Brussels. –

Martin Robinson

To licence, or not to licence...

... that is the question. The CAA is adding the final touches to the revised CAP428, which sets out the terms on which flight training can be conducted at unlicensed aerodromes – it may in fact have been published by the time this gets into print. The removal of the licence requirement opens up new opportunities for FTOs but also introduces a number of issues which could adversely affect airfields and flight schools. Costs should be reduced and the opportunities should outweigh the threats so

the move is welcome, but many operators need to weigh their options carefully.

For decades, AOPA has been fighting for the most costly requirements of licensing be removed, such as the level of mandatory fire cover, which has

never saved a life in all of history, repeat CAA visits and costly bureaucratic paraphernalia. AOPA would have preferred that the licence remain in place as a low-cost option because it provides a degree of protection, however flimsy; many airfields and FTOs reply to complaints with a form letter saying they are licensed by the CAA, they conduct operations within the terms of that licence, and any issues should be addressed to the Authority. Some local authorities send out a similar letter, and it remains to be seen what happens when that can no longer be said. If a local authority or councilor suddenly believes responsibility has fallen to them, that won't always be a good thing.

And will there actually be a financial saving? Set-up costs and expensive items like liability insurance could exceed the cost of the licence. On the other hand, the removal of licensing requirements and costs altogether could even make it viable to open disused airfields for flight training and GA operations – if you can identify any such possibilities, there's never been a better time to act on them. There are a few 'ifs' to include in any such notion. AOPA's Martin Robinson says: "I suspect nothing will happen very quickly, and a lot of operators will wait and see before deciding which way to go."

At time of writing it is unclear exactly what FTOs and airfields will have to do to operate safely and legally without a CAA licence. The main issues would seem to be planning laws, site surveys and risk assessment, safeguarding, Environment Agency involvement, and insurance.

AOPA's planning advisor Anna Bloomfield says that all of general aviation is bedevilled by the fact that so much of planning law is down to local perception and officer interpretation, and what's good for one airfield may not be good for the next one down the road. In particular, what constitutes a 'material' change of use is often left to individuals to decide. Flight training may therefore be subject to a requirement for planning permission in one area and not in another. It's possible that the coming amendment to Rule 5, which is required to allow the practice of touch and goes and go-rounds at unlicensed fields, could be deemed to constitute a material change. A local impact assessment may be required, covering a range of criteria.

Anna says: "Each site will have its own

issues. There may be a specific condition attached to a planning permission relating to a flying site that prevents circuits and touch and goes. Such a condition would probably have been imposed because these movements tend to be the most intrusive in the local area. In such cases the change in the ANO will make no difference. An application would be required to lift the condition.

"Where there is no current planning restriction it may be possible to introduce this new way of operation without further recourse to the planning system. There may be a couple of avenues which could be adopted should a flying site's character be changed significantly. Firstly it may be possible to argue that a material change of use has occurred. This will be down to 'fact and degree' and is not easily quantifiable. Secondly, environmental health legislation regarding noise nuisance, which is not directly related to planning, may be cited if



Expensive fire cover should not be mandatory at one training airfield when it is accepted as unnecessary at another

the noise profiles alter and disturbance increases.

"I am not aware of any debate in the planning press on this matter, but have no doubt the issue could emerge over time. I think it is a matter of waiting and watching how this evolves in practice."

John Haffenden, who until recently ran Shoreham Airport, is in the process of setting up the Unlicensed Airfields Association, (www.unaa.org.uk) and is offering his services to unlicensed fields as a consultant. He identifies the issues as:

- **Safety.** This involves the physical characteristics at the location as well as the airspace surrounding it, including the impact on any nearby flying sites or airspace.
- **Planning.** As above, except to stress that there is a need to communicate clearly with the planning authorities, ensuring that both sides have a clear understanding of the circumstances, past and present. A Certificate of Lawful Use might also be a vital part of the process.
- **Safeguarding.** The physical location, its surroundings, obstructions like trees, roadways, public rights of way and future planning applications will all require scrutiny by the owner or operator of the site. Any alteration outside the boundary of the aerodrome must not have an adverse effect on safety, not just on approach and take-off, but laterally.
- **Environment.** The Environmental Agency is responsible for issues of noise and pollution

and has powers in many other areas. Early dialogue is essential, particularly with regard to fuel storage and contamination risks, as well as firefighting agents that are contaminants.

- **Site survey.** Although the site may already be used for aviation, changes in surrounding development; tree growth and the physical characteristics of the immediate area should be surveyed and documented, to allow any changes to be identified and to demonstrate that a structured and managed approach is being applied.
- **Risk Assessment.** This must show that all areas have been fully investigated, assessed and documented. It's important to be able to demonstrate through documentation how the safe provision of flight training can be achieved. This covers on-site rescue facilities and documented acceptance of the situation by the emergency services.
- **Insurance.** There may be cowboys who are prepared to offer flight training without liability insurance but hopefully they're few and far between, and won't last long. What happens when a pilot has an accident at an unlicensed strip, and he (or his widow) sue because there was no fire tender? Could a cowboy operation cause problems for the whole industry?

The issue of flying instructor insurance was discussed at the AOPA Instructor Committee in March; it was thought that nothing would change under the new system. The instructor's duty of care remains the same wherever he or she is operating.

Mr Haffenden says: "It's important to recognise that the CAA will not go away completely, and it remains to be seen whether the removal of the licensing requirement will lead to more direct oversight of flight training organisations, whether by the CAA on its own account or in response to EASA requirements."

AOPA's focus now is on persuading the CAA that if expensive fire and emergency cover and annual audits are not needed at some flight training airfields, they should not be mandated at others. Martin Robinson says: "We see no reason why some flight schools should continue to operate under a costly licensing regime when others across the fence are exempt."

What will it all mean in terms of encouraging more people to take up flying? From a commercial viewpoint, the jury's out on whether it will lead to cheaper training, or whether training that is only marginally cheaper drives business. The saving could range from £4,000 to £30,000, depending on size. FTOs at airfields which must remain licensed because they accept commercial flights may be operating under a disadvantage, but students may place a premium on flying at an FTO who operates under a CAA licence, and an industry Code of Practice may be a poor substitute. Pure price would not seem to be an answer in itself; attempts to improve business by offering training on aircraft like the Ikarus have not been notably successful. To thrive, an FTO needs to be close to a centre of population – while some people are prepared to travel long distances to fly, the majority will choose to train close to home. And it's reasonable to suspect that any savings will vanish into the company. Most FTOs have high turnover and miserable margins, if any, and won't be able to afford to pass on savings to customers. Watch this space. ■

Ofcom drives blindly on

Ofcom's consultation on its proposal to impose a new tax on aviation radio has been extended to April 22nd, but don't expect any change out of them; this is an example of one of those meaningless going-through-the-motions consultations that give regulation a bad name. The Treasury wants some money, Ofcom has been ordered to go out and get some, and they don't want to be confused with facts.

A consultation like this serves only to highlight any game-stopping nonsense for the proposer – Ofcom's original proposals to tax the emergency services were clearly untenable and have been dropped. But it will not be turned from its intention to tax airfield radios, and because the move needs no primary legislation – Ofcom already has all the Parliamentary powers it needs to force it through – there's nothing we can do about it.

Safety arguments cut no ice; Ofcom says it is not responsible for safety and won't take it into consideration. Martin Robinson says: "I have another meeting with Ofcom on April 16th but I hold out very little hope of being able to introduce any logic into the debate. They've been given a task and they're going to push it through."

Ofcom says its intention is to make users more efficient by introducing differential prices for 25 and 8.33 MHz, but the Europe-wide decision to mandate 8.33 by 2018 has destroyed this claim. Martin Robinson says: "The idea of introducing market forces where there is no possibility of buying and selling is new to me."

All that's left is for industry to work out how it's going to cope with the new stealth tax. Small airfields have not done well in recent times; we've had two poor summers on top of an avalanche of increases in CAA charges, and

many are operating in the red. Landing fees have in some cases been raised to breaking point and won't stand further stretching. Those airfields which manage to find saving in the CAA's removal of the licensing requirement for flight training may find that Ofcom's demand

for a handout negates any advantage.

Martin Robinson says: "The Conservatives have said they intend to take away Ofcom's policymaking powers if they are elected, but that will take time, and Ofcom intends to introduce these taxes from January 1st 2011. Neither safety nor financial arguments cut any ice with Ofcom – they're excited at having found something new they can charge for, and they will not be denied." ■

Rating revalidation changes

We have received the following information from CAA's Head of Licensing and Training Policy affecting revalidation of SLMG and Microlight Ratings by experience. I have attempted to précis the actual letter as follows:

The ANO 2009 superseded the ANO 2005 on 1 January this year and whilst the new Schedule 7 of ANO 2009 has not changed anything for the NPPL it now requires:

all microlight ratings on UK PPL(A) licences to be revalidated by experience on the 13 month cycle; all microlight ratings on commercial licences to be revalidated on the 12 in 24 month cycle; and all SLMG ratings on UK PPL(A) licences to be revalidated by experience on the 24 month cycle.

This is clearly not in accordance with the previously CAA issued 'Advice to pilots concerning the Air Navigation (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2007 and Exemption ORS 4 No. 711', and does not allow for current practice. To facilitate the continuation of current practice the CAA have issued three General Exemptions that additionally allow for:

Microlight Ratings on UK PPL(A) to be renewed in the same way as microlight ratings on NPPLs – (12 in 24);

Microlight Ratings issued prior to 1 February 2008 on Commercial licences to be renewed in the same way as microlight ratings on UK PPL(A) – (5 in 13); and

SLMG Ratings issued prior to 1 February 2008 on all licences other than NPPL to be renewed in the same way as microlight ratings on UK PPL(A) – (5 in 13).

When the EASA Opinion on Operations and Licensing is published later this year the CAA will have to begin a study on the transition of certain licences to EASA. This will be followed by consequential amendments to the ANO, all of which will take some time. Rather than propose further changes to the ANO at this stage, it has been decided better to make all necessary changes as part of the transition to EASA rules. For this reason the CAA have issued the above mentioned Exemptions for the period up to 8 April 2012, when the EASA legislation for licensing first comes into force. When the EASA Opinion is published the CAA will then know the periods to be allowed for transition, and at that stage the CAA will consider whether to re-issue these Exemptions to be valid to a later date, consistent with the transition of SLMG ratings to EASA Implementing Rules. – Neil Monks

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To register for the seminar visit the AOPA website www.aopa.co.uk or phone 020 7834 5631

War on infringements

General aviation needs to come up with its own ideas on how infringements of controlled airspace can be reduced. Yes, NATS is reporting them more aggressively, and yes, some of the 'infringements' they report might not have been thought worthy of comment a few years ago. But the fact is that one infringement is too many, and the potential for disaster if a serious infringement gets away from everybody is so serious that we simply can't afford to be defensive about them. We must make airspace infringements as unacceptable as drink-driving.



The issue was discussed at the February meeting of the Members Working Group, where Martin Robinson urged members to suggest their own solutions. He said: "The CAA, NATS and industry are working together on how to tackle infringements, and we need to think of how we can come up with ideas on how to reduce these numbers. The number of serious infringements is quite low, and where reckless or repeat offenders are concerned, I've been banging on at the CAA about taking their licences away. Serious, reckless infringers will ruin the whole GA industry if there's an incident involving CAT and GA. At the very least, before we can fly we'll have to file a flight plan, and there'll be more pressure for transponders. GA needs to get its own house in order, it needs to talk up this issue, and it needs to arrive at its own solutions rather than have someone else's forced upon it."

AOPA has ploughed through endless data on infringements and has not been able to establish an offender profile. It happens to students with double figures of hours, it happens to instructors and airline pilots with tens of thousands. Just about the only thing infringers have in common is that they thought it could never happen to them.

Martin Robinson says: "There's no common level of experience, local knowledge counts for little, it happens to instructors and professional pilots as well as low-time PPLs. There is almost always a human factors element to infringements – people are distracted by their passengers, by the need to do something pressing that has arisen, or allow their concentration to lapse for some reason. How do we address these human factors in training? What can we do to make people more aware of them when they go flying?"

"As far as most of the serious infringements I've been involved with go, you've got to ask how they got themselves into that situation, and whether they were not taught properly or simply forgot the rules. Why don't they talk on the radio, what is the root of the lapses that combined to cause the infringement?"

NATS and the CAA accept that UK airspace is convoluted and sometimes difficult to find your way around, but to their credit the CAA does not seek to simplify matters by drawing straight lines that would further encroach on the Open FIR. Over-reliance on GPS is an often-quoted factor, but there is less evidence for it than one might think.

Geoffrey Boot, who chairs the AOPA Instructors Committee and represents AOPA on the General Aviation Safety Working Group and the Airprox Board, says that no over-riding common factors that cause infringements have

been established, but that he believes more could be done to tunnel into the data to find out which underlying factors crop up repeatedly.

"The data we have has been inconsistent because NATS has decided to log every infringement, however small, which they did not historically do," he says. "But we do not mine the data in the same way we look at accidents or airproxes, and perhaps we can do more in that direction."

"In my experience, contributing factors can include poor flight planning, poor monitoring, poor communications, ATC error, or all or none of the above. The complexity of UK airspace is

undoubtedly a factor, with narrow corridors and pinch points figuring in many infringements. And in a large number of cases, pilot distraction or loss of concentration figures."

Geoffrey himself has experience of the problem, having been investigated by the CAA after infringing airspace at Stansted. In his case, he was distracted by the fact that he had lost an engine in his twin, and was trouble-shooting when he stepped over the line. "The CAA accepted that I had my hands full and took no action, but I accept that it shouldn't have happened," he says.

One heartening factor is the infringements of Red Arrows RATs are way down, in large measure, Martin Robinson thinks, because of the publicity that has been given to them in the last three years. Can we now do the same thing with other infringements? ■



Geoffrey Boot: 'no over-riding common factors that cause infringements have been established'

Mayday for Lee

Lee Flying Association, the organisation that saved Lee on Solent airfield for general aviation, is hosting a fly-in on May 1st by way of celebration, and everyone is invited. Well, apart from jets, anyway.

This wonderful airfield might have been lost forever had it not been for the stalwart efforts of a small group of pilots, supported by AOPA, who fought for years to preserve it as a GA airfield. Had it not been for them, you might never have been able to get EGHF in your logbook – now's your chance to rectify that.

If anyone wants to stay overnight, LFA has hangarage and hard standing available – get in touch and they'll do what they can for you.

LFA shares the airfield with the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club, but they'll be away on an expedition over the May Bank Holiday weekend, leaving the airfield more easily accessible to powered flyers. The resident Coastguard S&R helicopters and Hampshire Police Islander will still be operational and will have priority; LFA we will be providing A/G radio to avoid conflicts.

Overnight parking and camping is available with shower and toilet facilities. There will be on-site catering from the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club clubhouse during the day on Saturday with tea and bacon butties for those departing on Sunday. Subject to demand, there may be a barbeque on Saturday evening.

The Hovercraft Museum is on the airfield and the airfield is also practically on the beach. It's a short taxi or bus ride to Gosport and the ferry to the fleshpots of Portsmouth (it says here), including the outlet shopping at Gunwharf Quays and the Spinnaker Tower with spectacular views over the Solent. Other local attractions include Portsmouth Naval Base, including the Royal Naval Museum HMS Victory and the Mary Rose, the Submarine Museum in Gosport and Explosion! the Naval Firepower Museum at Priddy's Hard.

Lee on Solent Airfield is operated by Hampshire Police and is strictly PPR, which will not be available on the day. To book yourself in, you'll need a copy of your aircraft's insurance

document indicating that you have Crown Indemnity cover. There are no slot times; you will be able to arrive and depart at any time during normal airfield hours. For details see www.eghf.co.uk Numbers may be limited.



'Fleshpots of Portsmouth' seen from the Spinnaker Tower

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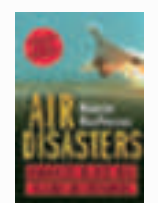
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Members do the business

The February meeting of the Members Working Group at White Waltham covered a lot of ground, from the IMC rating to Ofcom charges via Olympic security and the licensing of aerodromes. Many of the salient issues are covered in separate stories in these pages, with the contribution of MWG members included, but here's a round-up of issues covered during the day.

Database and website update

AOPA is in the process of revamping its computer systems and developing a new and more useful website, with Mike Cross taking the lead and the Members Working Group putting forward suggestions for new functionality.

Mike told the MWG that it's been recognised for some time that there were problems with the current database, an early-generation model which allowed only one user at a time and was accessible only from a single point. Together with Mick Elborn, he was working to update the system, and they are hoping to get help from AOPA members with expertise in the relevant fields.

The database is used primarily for member administration and distribution of the AOPA magazine *General Aviation*. Mike told the MWG: "The number one priority is to establish

a new system which will do what the current system does, and allow the staff to handle it in familiar ways, before adding on new, useful functions.

"Everything is very manual, and we'd like to achieve automatic data capture. In order to provide additional member value, we need to know more about them. At the moment we know their names, addresses and email, and licence numbers if they have Aircrew Cards – we don't know which airfields they fly from, which ratings they hold or anything else about them.

"We would hope to create a member profile to allow an individual to go into it and provide details of medicals and ratings, so that the website can generate reminders of when medicals or LPCs are due."

In addition, he said, the website could in future provide flight planning tools, weather links, AIS data, as well as up-to-date news, information on mentoring, regional representatives and AOPA services, as well as providing a one-stop-shop for those who were considering learning to fly but didn't know how to set about it. Mike added: "It's important that this be a team effort, and we to involve a lot of people who have suggestions and who are able to help."

Mick Elborn said the first order of business was a 'requirement specification' for the website, built on everyone's thoughts. The members agreed to email their suggestions,

after which a meeting would be arranged to flesh out the requirement spec. If you have ideas on what the website should contain and how it should operate, email them to pat@richmondaviation.co.uk for consideration. And if you have expertise in this field and can help Mike Cross and Mick Elborn, please make yourself known.

Local reps

Andy Rehorn runs the AOPA regional representatives network, but he's been doing his commercials and has landed a time-consuming job, so he needs a little help to energise the system. Mick Elborn has written a 'requirement specification' for the reps network and has sent it to Andy, who will circulate it to reps for comment.

One of the regional reps' issues, the Wings Scheme, is also in need of re-energisation; Pauline Vahey and Mel Stewart are looking at what help they can offer Roger Keen in this regard. It was suggested that some of AOPA's prominent members like Martin Shaw and Nick Mason may wish to assist in the promotion of the Wings Scheme; Martin Robinson is to investigate. (Martin said later that Cliff Spink had agreed to help out here).

Helicopter turbulence

Mel Stewart, from Soloflight at Humberside, suggested that pilot are perhaps not sufficiently aware of the problems of turbulence caused by helicopters. Recently a pilot at Humberside suffered a take-off accident because, he believed, ATC did not give enough time after a helicopter had passed for wake turbulence to subside. ■





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Dates for your diary

Aero Friedrichshafen

Is it too late to book passage to Aero Friedrichshafen, which runs from April 8th to 11th? Probably not, and it's well worth the effort. Aero is defying the economic gloom with more than 450 exhibitors from 25 countries having booked space in nine halls. Outdoor exhibit space is fully booked, and more than 50% of the exhibitors come from outside Germany. Aero has grown exponentially since it was first held, and from this year it will be



an annual, rather than a bi-annual, event.

IAOPA will have a major presence at Aero and is included among the event sponsors, and the AOPAs of Germany and Switzerland have joined together to take substantial exhibition space. The IAOPA-Europe quarterly Regional Meeting will be held in conjunction with Aero, and IAOPA President Craig Fuller will be attending and addressing a conference.

Aero showcases every facet of GA from hang gliders to business jets. Project director Thomas Grunewald says this year's strong showing is due to the fact that in a recession it is even more important for manufacturers to

market their products aggressively. "For many of our customers, Aero is a persuasive reason not to take cover and react to these challenging economic times in an anti-cyclical manner," he says.

Aero is held at Friedrichshafen airport, with a free shuttle bus running between the terminal and the show.

IAOPA World Assembly

All AOPA members are welcome at the IAOPA World Assembly in Tel Aviv in June, but please make sure you book through the website so they know you're coming. AOPA Israel's Yigal Merav says delegates have already registered from the USA, Canada and China as well as European countries. Those planning to fly themselves to Tel Aviv include a group of ten pilots from AOPA Italy, and eight aircraft from AOPA UK have booked slots. Other pilots will be flying in from Greece, Turkey, Crete and Cyprus. The event runs from the 6th to the 12th June. For the first time, it's possible to do everything online – register, book accommodation and plan your itinerary. The website is www.iaopa2010.com. There you'll find details of the work programme, together with information about the accompanying persons programme and the opportunities for guided visits to old Jerusalem, Masada and the Dead Sea during and after the Assembly.

Icarus flies again

AOPA Hellas and the Icarus 2010 Organising Committee cordially invite all AOPA members to participate in Icarus 2010, the second International Aero Expo to be hosted at Tatoi Airfield outside Athens from 18th to 20th June. Icarus Aero Expo Athens 2010 is the only international business and general aviation exhibition in southern Europe, which is one of the fastest-growing aviation markets because of its excellent weather conditions and infrastructure availability. Yiouli Kalafati, President of AOPA Hellas, says: "The world of aviation now has an opportunity to introduce itself and explore the untapped potential of the region while paying a visit to Athens, at the crossroads between East and West, a bridge to the Middle East." In June 2008 AOPA Hellas organised the first International Aero Expo Athens which proved to be a huge success with more than 40,000 visitors, 60 exhibitors



AOPA Hellas's Yiouli Kalafati welcomes you to Icarus 2010



representing 108 companies, 20 seminar speakers, 105 aircraft, and an air show with the participation of civilian and military aircraft. This flying start gave AOPA Expo Icarus 2008 one of the premier positions among European Aero Expos. The second Icarus Expo Athens will again be hosted at Tatoi Airfield (LGTT), and will feature an air show with civil and military planes, trial flights for the public, seminars with keynote speakers, and free access to the Hellenic Air Force Museum and to a unique private war bird collection at Tatoi. Yiouli says: "The events of the 2nd International Aero Expo Athens are being organised under the auspices of IAOPA Europe. Given the recognition of IAOPA among the international general aviation community, the organisational support of the Hellenic Air Force and the support of the Greek Government, Aero Expo Icarus 2010 is bound to be a resounding success with even more resounding benefits for the region's aviation key players. So come along, and we'll give you a true Greek welcome!"

Aero Expo

Closer to home, AOPA will have a stand at Aero Expo at Wycombe Air Park from June 25th to 27th. This is unquestionably Britain's premier general aviation show – more details in the June issue of *General Aviation*, but get it in your diary now. ■

AOPA is there to help

There are two very frustrating factors in endeavouring to deal with planning and/or operational issues relating to general aviation flying sites: (i) some people come to AOPA as a last resort when other routes have failed, and often this is too late for effective action; and (ii) even more people fail to keep us informed of progress when we have made our initial inputs.

These problems are not new, but despite repeated requests for change, our pleas are unheeded. Certainly in the first case, it is the people whom we are trying to help who become the losers. Recently, two cases in which we might have had some influence have fallen flat as one was notified to AOPA on the very last day for submissions and the other came to us a week after the closing date. In yet another instance two opposing views (from the owner and main user) on the same aerodrome prevented us from making a meaningful submission. As AOPA's experience in this field may be unique, we could be far more effective and influential if some of the people who seek help would become more organised in their approaches to the task.

If you contact us as the earliest possible opportunity, providing us with the information needed to get the action started, we will have the time to follow (and possibly change) the situation from the beginning. The quickest route is by email to david@aopa.co.uk, or if you need to send documents, please do so by post to me at AOPA, 50a Cambridge Street, London SW1V 4QQ. – David Ogilvy

An unhelpful law

The government has introduced a specific law which makes it an offence to shine a laser light at an aircraft. Good news, you might think – but unfortunately it isn't. Previously, criminals who tried to blind pilots were charged with endangering an aircraft, and Judge Tudor Owen, a helicopter pilot who sits at Snaresbrook Crown Court, established a precedent, upheld on appeal, by which a jail term was deemed a suitable punishment. The new law, however, provides only for a fine to be levied. AOPA is disappointed at this retrograde step, and in particular with the lack of consultation with the aviation community before the decision was made.

Instructors hear case for the EIR

Jim Thorpe, the former chairman of PPL IR who represented Europe Air Sports on EASA's FCL008 working group, was invited to address the AOPA Instructor Committee in March on the deliberations of the working group, which has delivered a damning verdict on the UK IMC rating to EASA. Also invited to the meeting was Dorothy Pooley, chair of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators' Education and Training Committee, which has misgivings about the En Route Instrument Rating proposed by Mr Thorpe and endorsed by FCL008. Instructor Committee Chairman Geoffrey Boot thanked Mr Thorpe for accepting the invitation to explain his position, but it's fair to say that his presentation changed no minds, highlighted more unanswered questions and served only to deepen the confusion over what FCL008 set out to do, who it represented and why it was so negative of the IMC rating.

Mr Thorpe gave a run-down of the non-IMC aspects of FCL008's deliberations. There was complete consensus on the need for a more attainable Instrument Rating, and to that end the working group had proposed to EASA a significant reduction in the Theoretical Knowledge (TK) requirements which are currently such a barrier to take-up. In addition, FCL008 had proposed an En Route Instrument Rating which would allow the holder, who would have passed all the TK examinations and completed a course of flight training, to fly in IMC on airways, but not to make instrument approaches.

Mr Thorpe said he had no personal antipathy to the IMC rating but was "entirely neutral" on it. He asked why, if the IMC rating had merit, other European countries had not seen fit to adopt it previously. Geoffrey Boot indicated that he'd had contact with individuals at a recent FAI Conference from a number of countries including Spain, France and Italy and that they would welcome an IMC rating but had been told it was not possible. Asked if he would support the rating if some mechanism could be found to induce the rest of Europe to accept it, Mr Thorpe replied: "No, because it's just not possible." He added that he did not believe the UK government would support moves for the rating's retention. "If I

had to put money on it, I'd say the IMC rating was a dead duck," he said. "You have to ask yourself whether a UK government is going to expend political capital in Europe fighting for a minority interest."

His position on FCL008 was, he said, not as a representative of any organisation, but as an 'independent expert' who was not there to articulate the position of Europe Air Sports, which is on record as supporting the IMC rating, including its extension into Europe if possible. He had, however, taken soundings before FCL008 began sitting, talking to AOPA among other organisations. "I made every effort to be inclusive," he said.

It was pointed out that some UK pilots had thought, given that Mr Thorpe's sponsor Europe Air Sports says it supports the IMC rating and that he gave no prior indication that he did not intend to promote or support it at FCL008, that he would speak up for the rating on the working group. Mr Thorpe said: "I tried my best to be the independent expert. Nobody suggested to me any methodology different from the one that emerged. The appropriate body for campaigning for the IMC rating is AOPA – I've been saying that for two years."

Mr Thorpe was asked how the UK Department for Transport had apparently come to believe that FCL008 was the forum in which the future of the IMC rating was under discussion but he said he would not be drawn on a document he had not seen. Given a copy of the document, he said he would need time to study it. Asked if he would help AOPA's campaign to save the IMC rating by writing to the Aviation Minister to point out the apparent anomaly, Mr Thorpe said: "I will not be drawn into it."

Mr Thorpe said that few limitations had been placed on FCL008 by EASA, but whatever they proposed had to be compatible with the Basic Regulation, and they had been told EASA was not willing to have licenses defined by airspace – a rating must be operable in all classes. Members of the

Instructor Committee pointed out that across Europe many countries reserved the right to stipulate what applies in certain classifications of airspace and what does not, and this would not change in the foreseeable future. Mr Thorpe said the ultimate aim was complete harmonisation, although that would be a long time coming. In the meantime, the idea was to introduce no new definitions.

Mr Thorpe said there was a lot of support at FCL008 for the En Route Instrument Rating (EIR). An EIR would allow a pilot who had passed the Theoretical Knowledge examinations for the full IR and completed a flying course to fly on airways in IMC, but not to make an instrument approach. Mr Thorpe said holders of an IMC rating would be able to get an EIR by passing all of the TK exams and doing a minimum ten-hour flying course. Members of the Instructor Committee said it was more likely that if they'd passed the TK exams they would fly for a few more hours and get the full IR. Mr Thorpe replied that it wasn't just him, but the majority of FCL008 members who supported the EIR. In response to concerns that few pilots would choose an EIR

over an IR, he said: "I think it will be a fantastic win for English flight schools." As to the danger of arriving over a socked-in destination, he added: "It's only a matter of making a good

weather decision, isn't it."

Dorothy Pooley asked who would be able to conduct training for the EIR. Mr Thorpe replied that training would have to be done by full Instrument Rating instructors, and he accepted that there would be a cost implication. Current IMC instructors would have to qualify as Instrument Rating instructors, he said, but their flight schools would probably pay for this. It was pointed out that this was "unlikely".

It was said that the majority of students didn't care about flying en route in IMC but took the IMC rating as a safety net in case they were caught out in bad weather. Mr Thorpe replied: "I'm neutral about the IMC rating in the UK. Nobody's stopping anyone doing the training, and declaring an emergency if they need to land." Instructors said, however, that it was vital for IMC rating holders to practice the skills it gave them, and making approaches only after declaring an emergency defeated the object.

Asked about the safety contribution of the IMC rating, Mr Thorpe said that he did not accept that death rates in UK general aviation were better in the UK than in France and Germany. Asked what evidence he was basing that statement on, he said: "I don't think those statistics can be demonstrated." It was pointed out that FCL008's brief to EASA, which Mr Thorpe said had largely been written by him, said that claims that the IMC rating made safer pilots "were not supported by the facts". What facts was he referring to? He said he was unable to be specific. But he went on: "The most likely result of the aggressive noise that AOPA is making is that the En Route Instrument Rating will bite the dust."

At the end of Mr Thorpe's presentation, Committee Chairman Geoffrey Boot thanked him for attending. "We'll just have to watch this space and study the NPA to see what can be done." ■

'Nobody's stopping anyone doing the training, and declaring an emergency if they need to land.'



Keith Wilson

Left: arriving in VFR 'is only a matter of making a good weather decision'

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Date for your diary...

On April 17th AOPA is participating in one of Duxford's Safety Bonus Days, at which representatives of aviation organisations set out their stalls with the aim of improving your knowledge, skill and safety – and you also get cheap landings and free entry to the best aviation museum in the whole world! Duxford runs several Safety Bonus Days a year, at which the CAA, NATS, D&D and other aviation groups are the focus. Some are dedicated to specific aircraft types, and Alan Evans, the Duxford AFISO who is one of the driving forces behind the programme, will be running a dedicated AOPA Bonus Day on September 18th – pencil it in, and look out for further details. See page 34 for full details

US fatal accidents increase

The annual GA safety analysis produced by the Air Safety Foundation of AOPA US, the Nall Report, shows there were more fatal accidents and fatalities last year than at any time in the last decade.

The figures are high despite an apparent downturn in activity – or, it could be argued, because pilots are flying less and are out of practice.

There has been a particular increase in accidents involving homebuilts, and the fatality rate – 27 percent – is ten points higher than for C of A aircraft. AOPA US is working with the Experimental Aircraft Association to address the issues.

Below: US homebuilt accidents have increased



FAA to run N-reg seminar



Everything you want to know about operating on the N-register will be explained at an FAA seminar loosely themed on 'the rights and responsibilities of pilots of N-reg aircraft operating outside the USA' to be held at Farnborough on April 13th. This has been arranged by the FAA's new representative in London, Tweet Coleman, and speakers will include India Pinkney, an FAA Attorney. Venue is the West Conference Room of Flight Safety International at Farnborough Airport, starting at 1400 and finishing at 1600. All welcome – email tweet.t.coleman@faa.com if you want to go

More listening squawks

Solent and Belfast now have 'listening squawks' to add to the growing list of these practical and useful innovations. Solent is 0011, and Belfast 7045.

For those who are not familiar, the idea is that if you're in the vicinity of controlled airspace, you can listen out on the relevant frequency and put in the listening squawk. ATC will know that they can contact you if they need to – there's no need for you to initiate radio contact. But remember, unless you're in receipt of a service, you must stay in the Open FIR.

The list of listening squawks around the UK is: 0010 Birmingham 118.050 MHz

0011 Solent 120.225 MHz (also covers Bournemouth, where the frequency to listen on is 119.475 MHz)
0012 Thames Radar/Gatwick 132.7 MHz / 126.825 MHz respectively
0013 Luton / Stansted 129.550 MHz / 120.625 MHz respectively
6170 Doncaster Approach 126.225 MHz
7045 Belfast Approach 128.5 MHz
7366 Manchester 118.575 MHz

The biggest issue that's arisen from listening squawks is people forgetting to revert to 7000 when leaving the area, so be sure to change squawk when you change frequency. ■



Channel Islands tax changes

AOPA's Channel Islands Chairman Charles Strasser reports that despite lengthy negotiations right up to ministerial level, the exemption from Jersey's Goods and Sales Tax (GST) for aviation fuel has been cancelled in the latest States of Jersey budget. This means that when administrative arrangements have been completed GST, currently 3%, will be added to all aviation fuel uplifted in Jersey for aircraft up to three tonnes. GST does not apply in the separate jurisdictions of Guernsey and Alderney.

Aviation fuel still remains duty free in the Channel Islands, and prices are attractive compared to the rest of Europe. Furthermore, there is a 5% discount on fuel for AOPA members. This applies to both local and visiting pilots, who can claim the discount on production of their current paid-up membership card. This does not apply in Alderney.

