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Front cover:
de Havilland Support's
Mark Miller flying
Auster Autocrat J1
G-AGTO at Little
Gransden airfield
Photo: Damien Burke

Chairman's message

A turning point for GA?

For me, August has been typical of many of the summer flying months, good on the whole but with the sporadic and unwelcome adverse weather affecting plans for long trips and attending fly-ins. I was particularly disappointed not to get to the PFA Rally at Kemble this year, which has been a regular fixture on my flying calendar.

In the AOPA office, it is normally quiet during August, the telephone does not ring so often and it is the close season for the many meetings and committees that are attended by AOPA representatives. However, in the penultimate week of July, the CAA released the content of its two reviews, the Strategic Review and the Regulatory Review of General Aviation in the UK, to the aviation press and public, following prior presentation to the CAA Board.

There has thus been plenty of time to peruse and digest these two weighty volumes, consisting of about 150 pages each. I have made various comments about these reviews in advance of publication in this column in previous issues of *General Aviation* and, although I could be accused of having commented enough, it is difficult to avoid a few observations of my own, despite more detailed coverage elsewhere. On the positive side the reviews are nicely produced and well structured. Between them, they represent, through the statistical data and summaries of particular aspects of GA, a valuable and wide ranging description of general aviation in the UK as it is currently perceived, or to use a buzz-word that has dropped out of fashion, the 'state-of-the-art'. This will come to be seen as a useful, and indeed unique, benchmark against which improvements or degradations can be measured in years to come. In the August issue of *General Aviation*, I remarked how fortuitous it seemed that the General Aviation Small Aerodrome Research Study (GASAR) by Terry Lober appeared just at the right time for many of its findings to be embodied into the reviews, and so it turned out to be.

Possibly the most important of all the recommendations is the first one in the Strategic Review, namely, recognition by Government of the economic and social value of GA and consideration of national policy guidelines in relation to GA and its future, including the maintenance of a viable network of GA airfields and the modification of the CAA's statutory objectives to remove any suggestion of bias toward commercial air transport. If these recommendations were taken on board by Government and acted upon, then the production of the two reviews might be seen in future years as a key turning point for general aviation in the UK.

The CAA has arranged for a conference to take place in London on 21st November with the objective of allowing the GA community to comment on the reviews and how the various actions and recommendations are being taken forward. The GA community will be largely represented, no doubt, by the general aviation associations and organisations and the aviation press. It is expected that the reviews will be summarised by the two respective chairmen of the Review Teams, a challenging task in view of the substantial content, but as the teams could not have done their work without the industry members, it is likely that there will be substantial support on the platform from the latter individuals. It also seems probable that the CAA will also take the opportunity to establish a dialogue on other matters of current importance, namely, those emanating from EASA such as the forthcoming new maintenance regime and the European recreational licence, and those arising from ICAO obligations, like Mode S and the carriage of ELTs. The cynical amongst us might view this conference as a self-congratulatory exercise, but personally I believe that it results from a genuine desire on behalf of the CAA at the highest level to take stock of GA and to be more overt and consistent in its support – time will tell if I am correct!

George Done

