

FAA throws a spanner in the works

The Federal Aviation Administration has set about making life difficult for the tens of thousands of pilots worldwide who hold FAA tickets on the strength of their national licenses. The new policy, unannounced and not subject to any consultation, means that such pilots must now make appointments and travel to the United States in order to amend their licenses – something all must do within the next year.

If you have an FAA licence issued in its own right – that is, if you took a knowledge test and a flight test with an FAA examiner – you are unaffected. If, however, your licence was issued on the basis of a CAA, JAA or other foreign licence (known as a 61.75 certificate) then you are going to find the going tough.

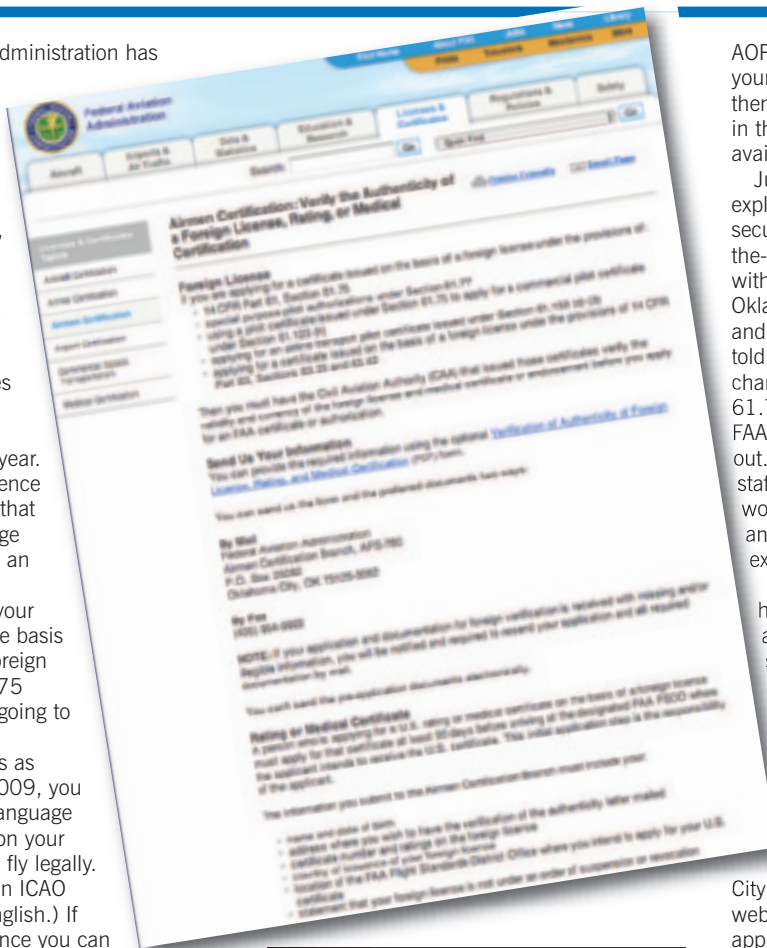
In brief, the situation is as follows. By March 5th 2009, you must have an 'English Language Proficient' authorisation on your FAA licence to be able to fly legally. (This is to comply with an ICAO requirement for better English.) If you have a 'full' FAA licence you can log onto the FAA website, pay \$2 and get your authorisation by post within a couple of weeks. If, however, you have a 61.75, you must use a special form to apply to the UK CAA to have your licence, ratings and medical validated by them, then apply to the FAA for an English Proficient stamp, make an appointment with an FAA District Office in the United States, go there and collect it in person.

Because of the time spent obtaining a validation from Gatwick before applying to a District Office for an appointment, it's unlikely that anyone can get the job done before March 5th – the FAA even stipulates 90 days notice for some types of appointment. The problem is compounded for pilots holding the old-style cardboard 61.75. The FAA has been issuing credit card style licenses for five years, and the cardboard ones are no longer legal after March 31st 2010. They cannot be exchanged online; a trip to the States is required. But at least you've got a year for that one.

Since AOPA first alerted UK GA to the English Proficient stamp problem in December, it has been working with IAOPA and AOPA-US to obtain some relief for 61.75 holders, in particular a delay to the start date of the ICAO requirement, if only to make it humanly possible to comply. IAOPA has fought against ICAO's 'Level 4' language requirement since it were first proposed, as they are grossly excessive for GA pilots, but has not convinced ICAO to change.

Ways around it?

There are a number of people in the United Kingdom holding themselves out as being able to provide English Proficient authorisations for a fee, but when questioned about this, the FAA's Airmen Certification department told



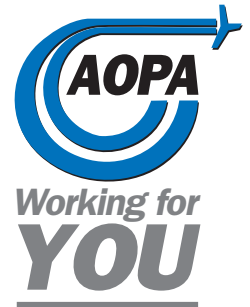
Above: details of the new arrangements are set out on the FAA website

AOPA that the only way to comply is to have your licence first authorised by your own CAA, then apply in person at an FAA District Office in the United States. No other option is available outside the United States.

Just why the FAA is doing this is not explained. It may be a security measure; in off-the-record conversations with FAA personnel in Oklahoma City, New York and Washington we were told that a lot of dodgy characters had obtained 61.75 licenses and the FAA wants to weed them out. But very few FAA staff anywhere in the world knew of the policy, and some denied its existence.

However, the FAA's website (see http://www.faa.gov/licenses_certificates/airmen_certification/english_proficiency/) states that unless your FAA certificate has 'English language proficient' on it by March 09, you may not exercise the privileges of that certificate. While full licence holders can simply get their stamp online, 61.75 holders who attempt to do so are blocked. Those who attempt to obtain their amended certificates by mail from the Oklahoma City office – the other route specified on the web for full licence holders – have their applications returned marked 'rejected'.

Under the URL http://www.faa.gov/licenses_certificates/airmen_certification/foreign_license_verification/ you will see, inter alia, the



Robinson made Senior Vice President

AOPA UK's chief executive Martin Robinson has been appointed Senior Vice President of IAOPA, taking charge of all of Europe under new IAOPA president Craig Fuller.

Martin has appointed Dr Michael Erb, managing director of AOPA-Germany, as his deputy and aims to develop IAOPA-Europe into a more cohesive and effective fighting force for general aviation.

At the same time he intends to foster closer ties and more co-operation between the AOPAs of Europe and AOPA-US to improve IAOPA's position on the global stage. Martin will be visiting Craig Fuller, president of both AOPA-US and IAOPA, at the Association's headquarters in Maryland to discuss how international co-operation can be improved.

IAOPA is a grouping of 66 national AOPAs who have joint representation at ICAO in Montreal. The AOPAs are organised into regions – IAOPA-Europe has 24 nations in membership and represents the interests of general aviation at the European Commission and Parliament, EASA, Eurocontrol and other pan-European regulatory bodies. Each nation works separately with its own regulators and government organisations.

AOPA-US is the largest, with some 400,000 members whose subscriptions and lobbying power make AOPA a major player in Washington. Despite being almost 100 times smaller, AOPA-UK punches far above its weight with regulators in Britain, in Brussels and in Cologne.

Martin Robinson says: "While it would be impossible for an AOPA in, say, France to deal with general aviation problems in somewhere like Hungary, there is a lot more that can be done to co-ordinate and improve our pan-European efforts to improve the lot of general aviation. Similarly, I hope to foster more transatlantic co-operation, and I look forward to working with Craig Fuller on this. I have been very impressed with him so far, and I believe he's just the man we need for these challenging times."

requisite information in the section beginning 'Foreign License'. If you have a 61.75 certificate, it says, "Then you must have the Civil Aviation Authority that issued those certificates verify the validity and currency of the foreign license and medical certificate or endorsement before you apply for an FAA certificate or authorization."



The information the FAA requires, it goes on, includes "...the location of the FAA Flight Standards District Office where you intend to apply for your US certificate..." and says once your CAA has verified your licence, you will be notified that your certificate has been forwarded to the District Office you specified, to be collected in person within six months.

For some reason, holders of licenses issued by the UK and Australian CAAs are singled out for special treatment. The FAA says: "In addition to the procedures stated under Verification of Authenticity of Foreign license, Rating and Medical Certification above, airmen from the United Kingdom or Australia must contact their respective CAA to complete

additional forms that are required prior to providing the requested information to the Airmen Certification Branch." At time of going to press AOPA was still seeking clarification from the FAA and the CAA on this issue.

Blank stares

Trying to find someone in the FAA or the CAA who could speak about these matters would try the patience of Job. Every which way you go in, you end up in the Department of Blank Stares. IAOPA's general secretary John Sheehan is working with AOPA-US's staff who deal with the FAA to seek answers. The only definitive statements have come unsigned out of the Airmen's Certification department in answer to AOPA's written questions. These answers say: "The initial step in re-verifying your 'restricted' certificate based on your foreign license is to submit a 'Verification of Authenticity of Foreign License' to AFS-760 requesting Civil Aviation Authority in your country verify the validity of your foreign pilot license, ratings and medical certificate.

"This form is located on our website at <http://registry.faa.gov>, choose Airmen

Certification, then under Certificates select 'Verify the Authenticity of a Foreign License, Rating or Medical Certification'.

"After your country has verified the authenticity of your foreign pilot license we will send the information to the Flight Standards District Office you have designated and a copy to you. You will then contact an Inspector at that FSDO and set up an appointment to complete the process."

Asked whether anyone in the UK or elsewhere in Europe was authorised to do this work, the reply was: "The only way is to go through the verification of authenticity process and meet with an FAA Inspector in the US."

No more paper

For those with cardboard certificates, the 2009 edition of the Federal Aviation Regulations contains a new part of interest. FAR 61.19 – 'duration of pilot and instructor certificates' (page 45 of the ASA FAR/AIM) headed 61.19(h), says the holder of a paper pilot certificate issued by the FAA may not exercise the privileges of that certificate after 31 March 2010. That means you must have the credit

Chief executive's diary: Ready for major surgery?

Our thoughts and resources are concentrated on Europe as we move into 2009; EASA, the EC and Eurocontrol will loom ever larger in our lives as the year progresses. Some of their proposals are good, some not good, but most of them will have a significant impact on our lives as aviators and we need to understand them in depth. Very few people do.

On November 17 2008 the CAA hosted a briefing day which included representatives from the European Aviation Safety Agency for a discussion on flight crew licensing. It's clear to me that the UK flight training industry has not fully grasped what is happening, and doesn't realise the extent of the proposed changes and their impact on the business of flight training. This is not a small tweaking of the system as it currently operates, but major surgery. While I believe there are some good proposals, the flight training industry needs to fully understand how their businesses will need to change in the future.

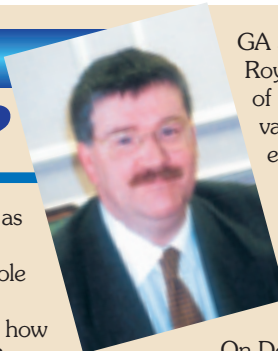
Next day we had the NPPL Ltd AGM at AOPA's offices. The partners in this business are AOPA, the Light Aircraft Association and the British Gliding Association. Recent changes made by the CAA to allow existing licence holders to exercise the privileges of the NPPL with an NPPL medical will create savings for pilots and will be of benefit to the industry, but the group agreed to look at ways in which it could continue to promote the NPPL system.

On November 25 and 26 I attended the Industry Consultation Body meeting in Brussels. This is the European body concerned with the development of the

Single European Sky as well as new implementing rules coming out of the EC. Our role is to consider the impact of these regulations on GA and how they dovetail into the SESAR programme. The ICB appointed a new chairman, Per Arne Watle, the former head of a Norwegian regional airline. It was also a time to say goodbye and thank you to outgoing chairman Fritz Freitl for all his efforts during his chairmanship. We wish him well in his retirement.

On November 29 I attended SPLASH, the Sport and Leisure Aviation Show at the NEC in Birmingham to learn more about the very light end of general aviation and to see if AOPA should have a stand at a future event. The show, which is mainly driven by the BMAA, was fairly well attended although not as large as I was expecting. If you have an interest in the very light end of GA and you haven't been SPLASH you may find it worth the visit.

The GA Strategic Forum met on December 3. This group, chaired by Roger Hopkinson, brings together general aviation bodies to consider what are the strategic issues facing general aviation today and in the future. A report on the first two years' activity has been written with the help of David Roberts and Dave Chapman, the newly appointed head of SRG, and will be published once it has been seen by CAA chairman Sir Roy McNulty. My mind goes back to the first meeting Sir Roy attended when he became chairman – it was the 50th meeting of the National Air Traffic Management Advisory Committee, at which he stated that he knew little about



GA and was keen to learn. It was Sir Roy's initiative to conduct two studies of general aviation which have proved valuable in creating a new environment of understanding and have also been used in studies by the European Commission. In fact, it was used in the development of the EC White Paper on a sustainable general aviation for Europe.

On December 5 the Department for Transport had one of its regular EASA briefings as it continues its dialogue with the aviation industry. This is chaired by Mike Smethers, a CAA board member and former DfT civil servant. Mike is now chairman of EASA's Board of Management, which means UK industry is able to express EASA concerns directly to him.

On the following day the Members Working Group met at White Waltham, and again it was well attended. Chaired by Chris Royle, the group continues its discussions on improving our website, the Wings scheme, regional representatives and mentoring.

December 8 and 9 found me at the ICAO European Air Navigation Planning Group's 50th anniversary dinner in Paris. It still plays a very important role in aviation through the development of standards and recommended practices, and the Paris regional office works on ensuring that Europe's plans fit into the ICAO global plan.

I went on to Brussels the following day for a conference at Eurocontrol, which is working on future avionics for general aviation. Although the conference was well attended and well organised, the event should have been limited to discussion about future avionics requirements for GA IFR operations in Europe.

On December 15 I sat in on an interview

card or plastic certificate by this date, with Orville and Wilbur Wright on the card, or you cannot fly your N-reg aircraft in the UK or Europe. That, too, can only be obtained by visiting an FSDO in the US.

The FAA is also starting to issue certificates with an expiry date. 61.11(c) (page 42) says a pilot certificate issued on the basis of a foreign pilot licence will expire on the date the foreign pilot licence expires, unless otherwise specified on the 61.75 US certificate. The CAA are now only issuing UK licenses valid for five years. If you're getting new 61.75, check whether your 61.75 has an expiry date. It will be listed on the back in the limitations part, along with 'English proficient'.

A common misconception is that 61.75 holders require an FAA medical. This is not true as can be seen on page 72 (61.75 (b) (4) 'medical certificates'. It's also listed at 61.3 (c)(2)(x) on page 39, which shows that you can use your UK medical.

FAR 61.3 says you are required to have your medical, UK licence and FAA certificate and passport on your person or readily accessible in the aircraft.

conducted by the CAA's Regulation Enforcement Branch with an AOPA member – more details perhaps later. On the 19th I went to a DfT briefing on the Single European Sky for a discussion on how the UK intends to apply the new rules coming out of the Single European Sky debate. Aerodromes were also discussed, as they too are part of the SES legislation. We also discussed how SESAR will impact on ATM in the UK.

On December 22 I went with another member to the CAA in Kingsway for an interview with the Regulation Enforcement Branch; again, I'll probably say more about that after the dust has settled.

Then we had the Christmas and New Year break, and business proper began again on January 6th. On January 7 and 8 I attended three meetings in Brussels, one with Alain Siebert, the chief economist of SESAR, where we discussed GA's involvement in the ATM master plan. Interestingly the timetable seems to be slipping but Alain made it clear that the Joint Undertaking wish to have a good working relationship with IAOPA. Also it looks like SESAR will become another EU Agency, and this seems to be taking up additional working time!

The second meeting was of the economic task force looking at the issues surrounding SESAR and its funding. The overall project will cost around €30 billion between now and 2030. I have made it very clear that general aviation could not be expected to pay for improvements to ATM infrastructure if the cost benefit analysis did not demonstrate clear benefits to our community, and some other form of funding would need to be found if the intention is to achieve system-wide benefits.

The third meeting was at Eurocontrol for a discussion on the first phase of SESAR, which is referred to as IP 1. The subject of most concern at this meeting was 8.33,

With a 61.75 certificate you are required to keep your UK licence current AND you are required to have a flight review – 61.56 (c) page 57: No person may act as pilot in command of an aircraft unless since the beginning of the 24th calendar month before that in which he acts a PIC, that person has

(1) accomplished a flight review given by an authorized instructor.

(2) A log book endorsement from an authorised instructor.

An authorised instructor is one that holds an FAA CFI or CFII, not a UK or JAR instructor.

If you haven't had a flight review within the last two years you are flying illegally. If you have an accident or you're ramp-checked your insurance company will not cover you and the FAA will fine you.

It's worth noting that the US domestic security agency, the TSA, is now saying that N-registered aircraft must be required to inform the agency of any flight, anywhere in the world, in advance. At the moment this is believed to be restricted to aircraft above 12,500 lbs, but there are a lot of itchy trigger fingers at the agency and anything could happen. ■

which is being considered for expansion down to ground level. There are other technologies under discussion which include data link and GNSS.

On January 12 I had a meeting with representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss future training courses for police officers who will be assigned to dealing with general aviation, and on the 13th I attended a meeting at the Home Office regarding future changes to the customs declaration forms you file before leaving the UK. Also on the agenda was immigration and the future requirement for passports to be swiped on leaving and entering the country. I pointed out that this was likely to be a major problem to general aviation, particularly at small airfields. This is part of the UK Border Agency's new remit, and it was said that they aim to achieve 100% compliance with these new rules.

A great day out on January 14 when I visited a new company known as Flightdeck Technology, looking at their simulators. They have developed a VFR simulator based on a Cessna 150 shell, and using similar technology they have a Boeing 737 simulator in which they do various forms of familiarisation training; more to follow on this topic.

Looking ahead at time of writing there's another CAA/EASA workshop on future European rules, and on January 29 the CAA is to host a safety partnership conference at the Hilton Hotel at Gatwick. We have the AOPA executive committee meeting on January 30, a DfT briefing on EASA on February 6 and an AOPA MWG meeting on February 7, followed by an Airspace Safety Initiative Steering Group meeting at Kingsway on February 9. So I won't be swiping my passport for the best part of a month! But a busy start to the new year nonetheless.

Martin Robinson

Victory in radio battle

Ofcom has been forced to go back to the drawing board over its plans to charge for radio spectrum following a furious reaction from the aviation industry and a warning that the regulator's plans run counter to international law.

In a major victory for common sense, the government's communications regulator has abandoned plans to start charging for aviation radios in 2009 and is reconsidering the whole issue. The decision will save millions of pounds – it was proposed to charge £126,000 a year for every DME and £115,000 for every ILS and VOR, and even .25 MHz radios at rural airfields would have attracted a charge of £4,950.

AOPA's CEO Martin Robinson says: "Common sense has prevailed, and although this proposal may come back in some form, it's difficult to see how Ofcom can overcome the obstacles it faces, particularly with regard to international law."

Ofcom had said the charges were designed to improve efficiency in spectrum use, but aviation frequencies are protected by international law and cannot be sold on to commercial users. "This was a tax-raising plan and nothing else," says Robinson, "and they shot themselves in the foot by trying to dress it up as an efficiency measure."

"In a series of meetings with Ofcom over a period of months it was clear that the realisation was slowly dawning on them that the situation was far more complex than they thought, and what they were presenting as a fait accompli was untenable. They will certainly be trying to find ways around the problem and I'm sure the proposal will come back in some form, but there are binding legal agreements that protect the aviation spectrum and it's difficult to see what they can do to get around them."

Ofcom says it will now come forward with new proposals which will not be implemented in 2009, and there will be a full round of consultation before decisions are made. ■

Win money helping AOPA

You can help AOPA while at the same time winning cash if you sign up for the AOPA Lottery, a monthly draw with some decent prizes.

Tickets are £1 each, and of the money raised, half goes to AOPA while half goes into the prize fund. The draw is made on the 20th of each month, and the winner gets half of the prize fund. Second prize is 35 percent of the fund, third prize is 15 percent. The lottery is open only to AOPA members.

At the moment more than 150 members pay a minimum of £1 a month by bankers order, and over time they make a significant contribution to AOPA's funds, and thus its ability to fight your corner. In recent times, some winners have asked AOPA to retain their prizes for Association funds, which is gratifying.

The Association is keen to increase the number of participants in the lottery, so if you want to join, send a note to Mandy in the office – mandy@aopa.co.uk or 0207 834 5631 – and she'll send you the right form. Good luck.

Passport control for GA

The Home Office is planning some complicated moves to control immigration which will involve everyone entering the country having to swipe his or her passport – a situation which could create problems for yachting and general aviation if not handled correctly.

At a meeting with Home Office representatives in January Martin Robinson was told that the requirement, proposed by the new UK Border Agency, is expected to be in place by 2013, although there were still some issues to be ironed out.

At the meeting he was also told that within three to six months there will be positive changes to the Gen Dec forms allowing pilots to file details online, a much simpler and less time-consuming method than the current print, fill in, fax system. They're not canning the fax line yet, but they will in time.

AOPA has co-operated with the Home Office and other government departments as they attempt to reduce the risk of terrorism, and as a result the once-strident claims that GA is a potential terrorist tool have virtually faded away. The Home Office in turn has shown itself to be willing to listen, amend and adapt its approach when the practicalities of general aviation call for it.

The 2013 plan has many facets, with the Home Office placing its faith in technology to ensure everyone clocks in and out of Britain. A requirement for every person to swipe a passport while showing his or her face to a camera is clearly workable at major airfields but poses problems at grass fields in the

sticks. The government believes videophone technology can make it feasible, but the cost would be significant – and if you think serving GA would be hard, imagine what it would be like for yachting folk. Is it workable?

The Home Office has the laudable aim of training designated police officers and civil



Above: government believes videophone technology can work at grass airfields

servants in the black art of general aviation so they can administer the new system from the point of view of knowledge of the industry. This is excellent news; too often GA pilots have to try to explain themselves to the uncomprehending rule-book holder, but being able to refer to someone who understands GA will be a real benefit.

In order to train these people, there will be a series of seminars run by the Association of Chief Police Officers and addressed by AOPA and the BBGA where policemen will be taught what GA is all about and will have all their questions answered. These officers will come from every area of the country, so it will be possible for GA pilots to know their local GA-aware people. The first seminar will be at RAF Henlow in February.

One area of concern for AOPA is that unlike with other police procedures, it is proposed that the police be empowered to stop and search pilots without having any intelligence or reason to suspect that they're up to no good. This is a resurrection of the discredited "suss" laws which caused explosive resentment in minority communities before they were repealed. AOPA has told the Home Office that in order to make any plan workable they need to co-opt general aviation as their 'eyes and ears' around the country, and it would be counter-productive to alienate pilots who ought to be subject to the same laws as any other British subject.

Martin Robinson says: "Anti-terrorism laws can easily be brought into disrepute by over-zealous and inappropriate application. The photographer who was recently arrested and held for six hours in London for photographing buildings is a case in point, as is the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act's provisions by local councils to chase litterers. You don't want to lose the respect and co-operation of pilots." ■



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Stansted transponder zone

National Air Traffic Services has begun consultation on plans for the imposition of a Transponder Mandatory Zone around Stansted Airport.

If implemented, the plans would ban all aircraft not equipped with an altitude-encoding transponder (Mode C) from an area which encompasses several GA airfields including North Weald, Audley End, Andrewsfield, High Easter, Rayne and Wethersfield.

In the consultation, NATS recognises that some aircraft cannot fit Mode C transponders and says: "We would work with local airfields and national organisations to develop procedures and Letters of Agreement to accommodate such aircraft as far as is safe and practical."

AOPA will be discussing the proposals with NATS during the consultation period to establish precisely what concessions and ameliorations will be guaranteed for airspace users. The Association is aware of the high numbers of infringements around the Stansted zone, a problem exacerbated by the lack of ground features in the area, and has some sympathy with controllers who must simply assume that an aircraft displaying no height information is below their airspace when they are vectoring CAT through it.

The Association is concerned to ensure that nobody should be excluded for want of kit

when viable alternatives can be agreed upon. It is also aware that this represents the camel's nose under the tent – once a TMZ is established at Stansted, they'll all want one.

NATS says 30 percent of the highest-risk infringements come from aircraft with no transponder, and another 25 percent from aircraft with Mode A transponders (no altitude

information). It says that affected airfields could be provided with Letters of Agreement setting out flight paths and restrictions for non Mode-C equipped aircraft.

The consultation period runs from January 12th to April 6th, and comments can be filed on stanstedTMZ@nats.co.uk ■

Below: once a TMZ is established at Stansted, they'll all want one



Avtur drawbacks

A number of pilots who fly avtur-powered aircraft have contacted AOPA to ask whether fuel drawbacks are available on foreign trips. Yes they are, if the trip is for private pleasure purposes; if they are on business, then no tax is payable on avtur in the first place and no drawback can be applied for.

There have been several queries recently from pilots who thought the European Commission's Energy Products Directive, which effectively tried to harmonise fuel taxes across Europe, meant that tax drawbacks were no longer available for avgas users. Not so – claim your entitlement in full, as always. Under international law there is no tax on aviation fuel, and France is as foreign as anywhere, the EU notwithstanding. Some refuellers will dispense avgas at the duty-free price on the basis of a declaration that the flight is foreign, but in most cases a fuel drawback form will have to be completed and a refund applied for. Some pilots have reported that refuellers have asked whether the trip is business-related, but it does not matter – the entitlement is the same.

Many misunderstandings have arisen about the Energy Products Directive, which mandated a minimum amount of tax on certain fuels. The EPD was not aimed solely at aviation but applied to all industries, and was presented to the UK as a done deal. Only through the good offices of the Treasury and the DfT was it possible to have avgas reclassified as a specialist fuel, which meant it could still be taxed at the preferential rate negotiated by AOPA and GAMTA 25 years ago – a negotiation that has saved general aviation millions of pounds down the years.

HOWELL WILLIAMS BSc(Eng), PhD, FIMMM, CEng, Eur Eng, MCIM 1937-2008

Howell Williams, who died on 12th November 2008, joined AOPA as an Instructor Member in 1978. He was a Flight Instructor and Chief Ground Instructor for the Sherwood Flying Club at Nottingham Airport, and Flight Instructor at the South Warwickshire Flying School at Wellesbourne Mountford Aerodrome. He was an ardent supporter of AOPA and became a member of the Instructor Committee in 1986, becoming a Director on the Board of the British Light Aviation Centre Ltd (trading as AOPA) and a Member of the Executive Committee in 2003.

Howell was one of those valuable but rare people who are 'doers', in that, through steady persistence, they consistently see a project in which they are involved, or have initiated, through to completion. AOPA flight training products whose existence has resulted from this desirable characteristic are the AOPA Flying Companion's Course, the AOPA Wings Award Scheme, and the revisions of the Ground Instructor's Certificate and the Radio Navigation Certificate. Howell also conducted a feasibility study in 1999 together with another colleague instructor on setting up the AOPA Flight Instructor Refresher Seminars to meet CAA requirements. This came to fruition and the seminars continue to be offered to this day. Howell's efforts were recognised by presenting him with a 'Friend of AOPA Award' in 2000.

Howell's professional interests began in metallurgy, having gained his PhD on metal fatigue research at the University of Cambridge. He subsequently worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), later becoming a lecturer in materials technology at the University of Aston in Birmingham in 1967. After a period of five years, he was back at the CEGB and PowerGen, becoming Head of Reliability Engineering until 1992. He later re-entered academia becoming Assistant Dean of Engineering at the University of Birmingham until his retirement in 1997.

In late February 2008, having been teaching aerobatics only two weeks earlier, Howell was diagnosed as having a suspected brain tumour which surgery subsequently confirmed. Although in April he was still well enough to be able to ask to be kept informed about the deliberations of the Executive and Instructor Committees, his condition sadly deteriorated over the summer until his death. He leaves his wife, Janice, two daughters, Liz and Clare, and son, Huw, to whom AOPA's sincerest condolences have been sent. Howell will be sorely missed by all of us at AOPA. – George Done ■



Help wanted

If you're an AOPA member it's generally because you want to do your bit to improve the lot of your fellow pilots in these challenging times. You pay your subs, you keep an eye on where the money goes through this magazine, and you share the credit for AOPA's victories, large and small. Do you have the time to help us more directly?



The Members Working Group has launched a number of projects designed to enhance GA in Britain, and needs your assistance to bring some of them to fruition. Can you help pilot these projects through?

As we learn on our management courses, ideas are ten a penny – even good ones. Without the people

to turn ideas to action, we cannot make progress. Some of the Members' Working Group's proposals are quite complex and although their progenitors have worked hard to bring them to the point where they can be implemented, they need help with project management.

An example is the AOPA Mentoring Scheme proposed by Timothy Nathan. This has the vital aim of keeping GA pilots flying, and retaining in aviation the people – the majority – who fall by the wayside for want to support and new challenges. The basic idea is that more experienced pilots can offer help to those who are concerned that they may be unable to carry a flight off, whether it be a difficult landaway for a new pilot or an early trip on



Above: Members Working Group needs your help to carry projects through

airways for a new IR. This is no substitute for instruction, but fills a niche between providing bona fide training and kicking the fledgling out of the nest.

A lot of potential difficulties have already been overcome by Timothy, aided by Steve Copeland and Martin Robinson, and the scheme has the backing of the AOPA Instructors Committee. The problem now is that especially in the early implementation stages, there is a lot of hands-on organising to be done. Like other members of the MWG, Timothy and Steve run their own companies and can't ensure the Mentoring Scheme gets as much attention as it needs. This is where you come in. Can you offer them help?

You don't have to go anywhere, attend meetings, read minutes or any of that rigmarole. But Timothy needs brains and hands, and he wants to hear from you if you can spare some time in what is truly a worthwhile cause for your fellow pilots. If you can make the time, contact mandy@aopa.co.uk and she'll put you together with Timothy. You can also call Mandy at the AOPA offices on 0207 834 5631.

There is more work to be done on other projects, so don't worry that you'll be edging some other enthusiast out – as the electricians say, many hands make light work.

At its meeting in December the Members Working Group moved ahead on several fronts, including website functionality, regional representatives, a 'fly a controller' programme, work on creating a more user-friendly EASA IR and the continuation of the IMC rating, English language proficiency and other issues of concern. Martin Robinson gave a run-down on active campaigns like Part M, EASA's plans for foreign registry, SESAR, the Light Aircraft Pilot's Licence, the Wings Scheme and fuel duty. He warned that plans for ATC to charge for VFR flight were back on the agenda – defeated thanks to AOPA three years ago, they are once again being promoted in Brussels by the airlines, and expressed satisfaction at the decision of Ofcom to go back to the drawing board on radio charging.

Mike Cross concluded with a review of the situation at Lee-on-Solent, where AOPA has supported the airfield users' campaign to preserve the airfield for GA. See separate story on Lee in the 'Briefings' section of this magazine. ■

Financial Benefits of AOPA Membership



As an AOPA member you are entitled to make use of any or all of the products listed here. You may find some of the AOPA products can save you money and, at the same time, you will be helping your Association

The AOPA AIRCREW CARD: This recognises and advertises that the holder has a valid private or professional pilot's licence. It provides pilot identification and help in security areas as well as offering substantial discounts at nominated hotels worldwide.

CURRENCIES4LESS: Offering private and corporate foreign exchange services for aviation purchases. Preferential rates and free transfer on your first currency exchange as an AOPA member. Tel: 020 7594 0594 or visit www.currencies4less.com

MBNA EUROPE: This offers preferential rate loans to AOPA members for all purposes including aviation activities. Also offered is the MBNA credit card. Ring 0800 517151. Reference number 2S 570705B.

AVCORP: Registration of N-registered aircraft for foreign owners through the establishment of special purpose trusts. Contact Peter Leventhal. Tel: 01452 715000 e-mail: info@avcorpregistrations.com

BESSO LTD: This is a leading Lloyds broker for aircraft insurance, loss of licence insurance and travel insurance that covers private flying. Besso also offers AOPA members 'insurance first aid' advice. Contact Howard Pearce on 020 7480 1045 or Hazel Fackerell on 020 7480 1048.

LEGAL FIRST AID: The Association's honorary solicitor is Tim Scorer of Thomas Cooper & Stibbard. If you need this service contact the AOPA office in writing, giving a full account of your aviation-related problem *but do not leave it until the last moment.*

Swansea University students win AOPA prize

AOPA supports an educational initiative that aims to encourage budding aircraft designers every year by providing one of the major prizes in the Annual Merlin Flight Simulation Group's Aircraft Design and Handling Competition, co-sponsored by the Flight Simulation Group of the Royal Aeronautical Society. This is open to student teams from UK universities and colleges; each team submits their own design of an aircraft to a specification set by their tutors which is then 'flown' on the Merlin simulator by John Farley, the now retired Harrier test pilot, and Dave Southwood from the ETPS. In 2008 the competition took place in June at the Royal Aeronautical Society headquarters in Hamilton Place, London. The team from Swansea University was selected by John and Dave to receive the AOPA prize, which consists of up to an hour's flying with an AOPA Corporate Member for each student. The members of the team were Lee Evans, Daniel Kendrick, Rhys Lewis and Chris Stirk. Lee's story of the team's flying experience with AOPA Corporate Member, the West London Aero Club, follows.

"Our team arrived at West London Aero Club on a crisp Saturday morning in late November. Our flying lesson had previously been postponed once this year due to poor weather, so we all had our fingers crossed for an enjoyable afternoon. Luckily, apart from the freezing cold, conditions were almost perfect for flying.

"Our instructors, Sue Thorne and Alex Temple, introduced themselves before whisking us away for a quick briefing. Since the aero club is not too far from the extremely busy Heathrow airport, we were briefed on our rather strict flight path and how we would be heading to Bembridge on the Isle of Wight.

"Breaking up into teams of two, I would take the pilot seat for what was to be the first leg of the journey, joined by our instructor and Rhys Lewis who would fly us back. Similarly, Daniel Kendrick would take control of the other aircraft before Chris Stirk and his instructor would fly back.

"After performing a walk around of the aircraft to check the aircraft control surfaces, stall warning device, lights and fluid levels, it was time to start the engine and work through the pre take-off check list.

"After obtaining the necessary air traffic clearance I was instructed to

open the throttle and we accelerated to the necessary speed required for take-off.

"Thankfully the weather for the day held out and London's skyline was clearly visible in the distance as we climbed. We were also fortunate enough to see three of the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers in Portsmouth Dock. Some straight and level flying later and we approached our destination on the Isle of Wight.

"After a warm drink and an informative chat with our instructors, we returned to the aircraft and headed back to White Waltham, only this time I was a passenger as Rhys flew us home.

"As graduates of Swansea University we have all been fortunate enough to experience similar flights as part of our Aerospace Engineering course. These experiences are not only great fun but they allow any aerospace undergraduate to fully appreciate the theory that they are



Instructor Sue Thorne flanked by students (from left) Chris Stirk, Daniel Kendrick, Rhys Lewis and Lee Evans

being taught, and are essential to gain a firm understanding of what flying is all about.

"Such experiences were put to good use when we designed our business aircraft for our Masters level group project, which gained us first prize when competing in the Merlin Flight Simulation Competition at the Royal Aeronautical Society in London.

"Not only did the competition at Hamilton Place win us first prize in the competition, but it also won us this fantastic flight from AOPA which was an unexpected bonus.

"The day of the competition was extremely rewarding too, as it provided great networking opportunities and proved to be an invaluable talking point for the graduate job interviews that followed after the competition. Many of us are now entering careers with Aerospace companies such as Atkins, Ministry of Defence and Messier Dowty.

"We hope that other universities and students will continue to enjoy and participate in the Merlin Flight Simulation Competition.

"All of our team would like to thank George Done and AOPA for this fantastic prize. We would also like to thank Merlin Aircraft Simulation Group, the RAeS, our wonderful instructors Alex and Sue, and also Clive Francis of Swansea University." – Lee Evans ■

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