

Letters to the Editor

Well done, Newcastle!

Sir,

I was flying on Saturday 18th April from Perth to Turweston. Just after passing Newcastle at FL55, my oil pressure gauge started flickering rather wildly. I advised Newcastle that I wished to make a precautionary landing and they cleared me to position for an immediate landing. On finals I advised that the gauge had stabilised but that I wished to continue landing so I could seek technical advice. We were escorted to the GA terminal by three fire tenders who checked all was well before returning to their station.

I went into the GA terminal with my passengers and contacted engineers. We discussed it in some detail and they concluded it was a faulty oil sender or connection so we were happy to continue our flight to Turweston where engineers were available to check our problem if it persisted (which it didn't).

Before leaving I asked if any fee was due and was advised nothing at all need be paid due to Newcastle being part of the Strasser Scheme.

Thanks to Charles Strasser and AOPA UK for taking the trouble to set up the scheme.

Regards

Ian Kerr



Charles Strasser writes: 'It's good to see the Strasser Scheme working exactly as it was intended to work. Had Ian Kerr been deterred from landing by fear of the potential cost, and had the problem turned out to be real, the result could have been very different. My congratulations and thanks to Newcastle Airport!'

Tongues of fire

Sir,

In March 2008 the CAA issued all British registered pilots with new licence documents containing in Box XIII a "Language Proficiency – English" 'grandfather rights' endorsement to meet the new ICAO requirement issued in March 2003 for all aeroplane and helicopter pilots, flight navigators, flight engineers and air traffic controllers to be assessed in their command of "the language used for radio communication". If you have not received your newly endorsed licence you should ask the CAA to issue you one.

The minimum requirement for those for whom English is not their mother tongue is Level 4 – Operational. Other levels are Level 5 – Advanced and Level 6 – Expert. Since English is generally accepted as the international language of aviation and is the mother tongue of most British pilots, most of

us naturally regard this CAA endorsement as 'unlimited', or meeting ICAO's Level 6 – Expert requirement which is valid for life.

It comes as something of a surprise to find that the CAA's automatic 'grandfather rights' endorsement of our Language Proficiency is only to Level 4 – Operational. This level has to be revalidated every three years, which for British pilots seems silly, if not insulting.

However, there is an easy solution to the problem. Any CAA licensed examiner who has already secured an English language proficiency endorsement at Level 6 – Expert can certify a pilot's English language proficiency at a higher level as demonstrated during any routine flight test, using CAA Form SRG/1199.

Since we all have to revalidate our flight ratings by flying one hour with an instructor at least once every two years, the simple answer is to incorporate this test/certification in the next compulsory flight with an instructor – provided that instructor is qualified to assess and certify English language proficiency (presently a CAA examiner).

English language proficiency to Level 4 – Operational is the minimum international requirement for IFR flight in all controlled airspace. Outside controlled airspace, national requirements (the French for instance) appear to require pilots to be proficient in only ONE of the languages used for air radio communication in France, English or French. So, our English language endorsement should be valid for flight outside controlled airspace in most European countries where the R/T languages are English and the appropriate

national language. Fortunately we do not have to obtain Level 4 – Operational proficiency in any other European languages to tour the Continent.

Nevertheless, some countries, especially France and Germany, require the use of their national language at private airfields where there are no English-speaking controllers.

But spare a thought for foreign licensed pilots visiting the UK. To meet the ICAO rules, all foreign

pilots visiting UK airspace, where English is the ONLY language used in air radio communication, should have at least a Level 4 – Operational English language proficiency endorsement. Enforcement of this requirement will be up to the CAA since the French instructions (at least) appear to say that the French aviation authorities will not demand proof of English language proficiency before approving VFR flight plans from France to the UK.

According to the CAA, the same rules apply to NPPL holders, but no action has so far been taken to reflect this requirement in NPPL licences. They also apply to Air Traffic Controllers, which presumably includes all ground/air radio operators.

One thing puzzles me. Why is the Language Proficiency endorsement recorded in the pilot's CAA flying licence and not in his separate CAA Flight Radio Telephony Licence?

Tony Purton,
Denham

Letter of the law?

Dear Sir,

The article 'Pedants' corner' in the April 2009 edition of *General Aviation* gives the impression that any pilot demonstrating their light aircraft to a potential purchaser would require an Air Operators Certificate (AOC). I am happy to say

that in most scenarios this is not the case.

If a private pilot or GA aircraft importer provides a pre-sale demonstration flight to a pilot, and no money changes hands for the flight, then an AOC is not required.

The exception to this would be if a potential purchaser were charged for the flight. For example, an importer of high-end business jets may wish to make a charge for a test flight that would be refundable on purchase. The flight then becomes public transport and an AOC would be required.

John Benyon

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**While AOPA is not generally in favour of the selective enforcement of regulations, it is pleased to receive the CAA's assurance that it will ignore the letter of the law in this instance.*

The easy route

Sir,

I refer to the article entitled 'EASA undermines third country licenses' (GA, April 2009).

Whilst I have total sympathy with many of the sentiments of the article, and with individuals affected by the results of the requirements, I would point out that the barriers raised are not unique to EASA. I do much of my flying in South Africa, and as a JAA PPL holder I had to pass the not unchallenging (somewhat pedantic) new air law exam, undergo a long navigation exercise, and pass a full flight test in order to comply with the new South African CAA validation criteria for foreign licences. This notwithstanding that I had already validated my licence under the 'old' rules, and had to be specifically rated for each individual type of aircraft I fly down there.

But surely it's not for us as pilots to look for the easy route to enjoying flying abroad. At the end of the day safety for all air users must be the first consideration, and surely it is up to individual CAAs (or EASA), to determine how they want to achieve and ensure this. We must, of course, retain at all times the right to object to over zealotry on the part of aviation authorities, particularly as it affects general pleasure aviation, but I do get the impression that AOPA has EASA in its sights, regardless of the rights or wrongs of what they legislate.

I'd love to be disabused of this perception.

Anthony Asquith

AOPA was one of the strongest supporters of the original concept of EASA; we would have a single regulator instead of 27, applying sensible, standard rules across the continent. But that hasn't happened; instead, we've ended up with 28 regulators. At the same time, EASA has shown itself to be almost impervious to suggestion, devoid of good sense, meddlesome, impractical and dictatorial. We wanted sensible rules; instead, we got Part M. One only has to look at some of the provisions of the NPAs on Ops or Authorities and Organisations to see that safety comes a poor second to bureaucracy. If you dealt with the regulators, you'd quickly realise that nanny does not know best; indeed, nanny has minimal understanding of GA, at every level. With regard to third country licenses, there are good reasons why people fly in Europe with FAA IRs in N-reg aircraft, and unless EASA addresses the root causes, the status quo should be maintained. It's certainly not 'an easy route to enjoy flying abroad' – Pat Malone ■