

Olympic airspace overkill

A vast restricted area stretching from south of Gatwick to north of Luton, west of Farnborough and east of Southend is to be imposed on VFR flights for fully two months covering the two weeks of the Olympic Games next year.

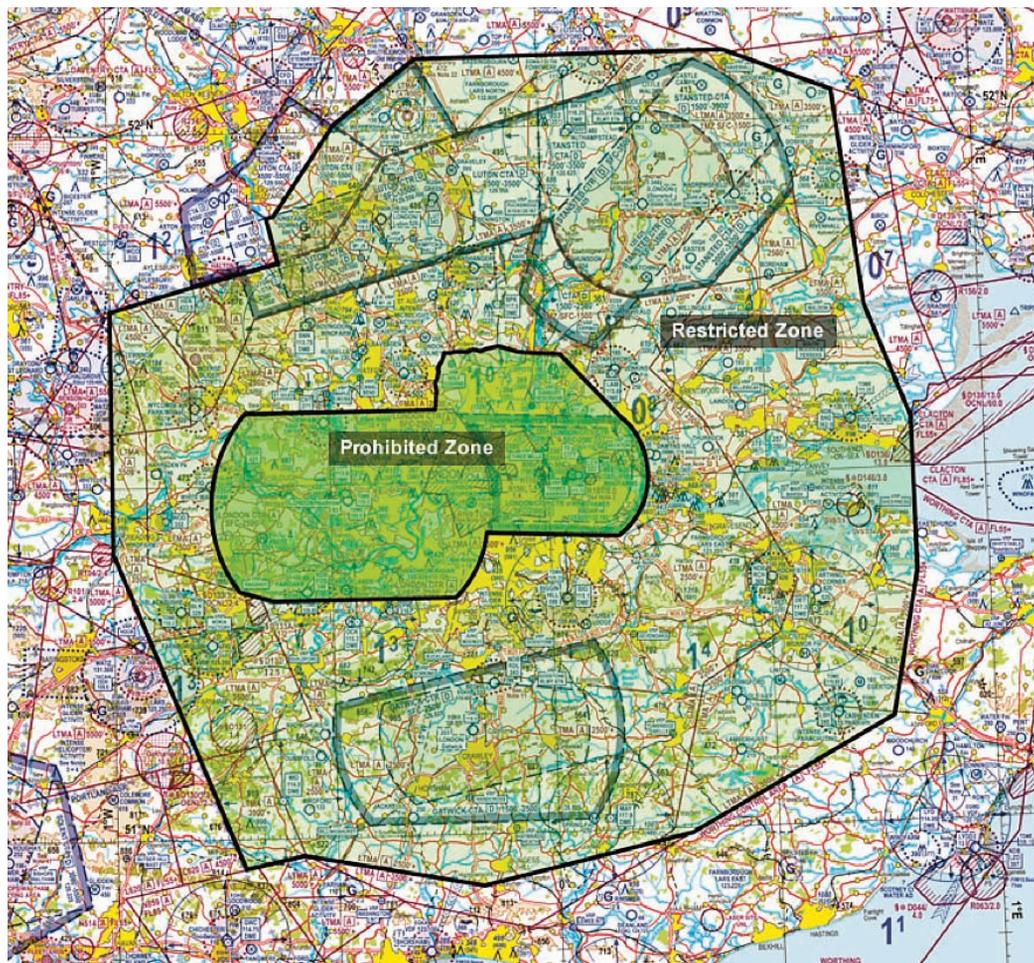
At its centre is an area in which all VFR aviation will be prohibited for the full two-month period, with the exception of police, medical and TV broadcast helicopters. Covering the Heathrow and London City zones together with a slice of Class G airspace reaching north towards the M25, it encompasses airfields like Denham, Fairoaks and White Waltham. Arrangements will be made to allow traffic at these airfields to gain access to the restricted areas, where flights will be allowed subject to a number of stipulations, and to the constraints of air traffic control.

While the Home Office says every effort will be made to accommodate general aviation businesses trying to survive under the restrictions – which fall at the busiest time of the flying year, from July 13th to September 12th 2012 – it is clear there is no realistic prospect of substantial change in the areas or the requirements, and there will be no compensation for the losers.

However, it's important to note that it could have been worse. AOPA's Chief Executive Martin Robinson says: "Let nobody get the idea that this airspace is closed for the duration. If that idea gets around, causing people to stay away, it could turn a drama into a crisis. It's not quite business as usual, but it is business, and if we can win an assurance that nobody will be refused access because of lack of ATC cover then it will be nothing more than a nuisance. Please don't over-egg it, or it'll become a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom."

The restrictions were bounced on the industry at a sometimes rancorous gathering at the Department for Transport in London on March 7th. While the Home Office, Department for Transport, CAA and NATS representatives there said the meeting marked the start of an 'engagement' with the industry about the restrictions, they had already been officially announced in a ministerial statement by the Secretary of State for Transport Phil Hammond, and the CAA's own statement, prepared in advance, spoke only of "working with the aviation community to ensure the restrictions are effectively implemented." We might win a few minor tweaks, but the overall picture is of a *fait accompli*.

While the CAA and NATS have been involved in the planning, the Ministry of



Defence and the Home Office are in the driving seat, and their diktat prevails.

Martin Robinson identified the main issue facing GA as one of capacity in the restricted area and sought guarantees that no aircraft that qualified for entry would be refused access. There are no such guarantees; while NATS says it will recruit extra staff and do its best, it says it has no realistic way of estimating traffic requirements and cannot guarantee entry – indeed, it is possible that at peak times, access will be denied.

Later it emerged that there was no agreement that NATS would service the Restricted Area, which it considered to be a security issue for which its controllers were not trained. NATS, which is a private company owned by the airlines, offered the use of its equipment for a fee said to be in the region of £4 million. It was not clear whether this included its charges for handling the Afpex and AFTN VFR flight plans, which it certainly has agreed to do. But sources at NATS said that the company did not believe it should be in the business of providing defence-related services. This opens up a whole new line of questions – does the military have the numbers to do the job, how will VFR inside the Restricted Area under military

control be passed off to civil control at the boundary? A meeting has been arranged in late March to begin thrashing out these many issues.

GA representatives at the original DfT meeting questioned whether the restricted area had to be so enormous, whether it had to be imposed for such a long period, and whether indeed the whole concept of VFR aviation as a terrorist threat was not hopelessly overblown. GA, it was said, should have been consulted long before charts were drawn up and restrictions were virtually set in stone, and should have been seen as a potential solution to some security problems rather than a nuisance. (There will be no helicopter transport at the Games, leaving hundreds of heads of state, VIPs and high-value terrorist targets to take their chances on the roads, along lanes marked as dedicated to Olympic traffic.)

Restrictions affect many Olympic sites, including Weymouth in Dorset, Newcastle, →



Coventry, Glasgow and several stadia elsewhere in the country. But the greatest impact is in London and the Home Counties.



Essentially, most aircraft wanting to operate in the restricted area will have to file a VFR flight plan on Apex or AFTN between 24 hours and two hours prior to take-off. If the flight is approved they will be given an access code, to be quoted on first contact with ATC, and they will have to follow their flight-planned route. Radio contact must be maintained, and a squawk will be given – Mode S, C or A.

For the duration of the restriction, the requirement for an altitude-encoding transponder in the Stansted TMZ will be lifted. Circuits will be allowed at affected airfields without the need for a flight plan, although a transponder will be required. Gliding, hang gliding and paragliding can continue from sites notified to the authorities, as long as aircraft fly no more than 3nm from the site. Cross-country glider flying can be arranged, but gliders will be treated the same as powered

Right: The Home Office's Director of Olympic Security Robert Raine tells GA how it will be



Chief executive's diary:

We've done this – you must agree

There can be few worse examples of consultation after-the-fact than the government's imposition of restrictions on flying during the Olympics next year. For the best part of a year, as you'll have seen in the pages of this magazine, AOPA has been pressing them to reveal their hand in order to give time for debate and preparation. So finally we're invited to the Department for Transport to 'begin a dialogue' on what is almost a *fait accompli*. No point blaming the CAA – this was cooked up by the Ministry of Defence, MI5 and the Home Office, and we have little chance in influencing them without input from the Directorate of Airspace Policy.

The real issue now relates to NATS and the MoD's ability to meet the demand. One estimate I have heard quoted is £4 million to service the airspace – we need to make sure NATS do not artificially control capacity by rejecting flight plans, otherwise I fear GA operators may simply launch assuming that their filed flight plan has been accepted. More work is needed to reduce the impact of this decision, whilst working with the authorities to deliver a safe and secure games.

The government is under great pressure internationally to ensure a peaceful Olympics, and trying to convince them that GA poses no threat doesn't get you to first base. There is a multiple belt-and-braces approach, covering both the Olympics and the Paralympics. We have begun a process of chipping away within the overall security framework to minimise the damage – we're talking about entry and exit lanes to allow flight training to go on almost as normal, proper provision for the huge number of non-transponder equipped aircraft in the Restricted Area, and most importantly of all, a guarantee that access should not be unreasonably refused because of under-provision of services by NATS. There must be enough people to handle the enormous volume of VFR flight plans, there must be

enough qualified controllers to handle the traffic. NATS is, of course, a private company owned by the airlines and there is little enough incentive to spend money on GA at the best of times. This is not the best of times.

Everyone involved admits they've made no effort to ascertain the level of VFR traffic in the restricted area at certain times. AOPA is embarking on an exercise aimed to providing enough data to base a realistic ATC requirement on. AOPA has asked the CAA to collect data during this summer in order to get a better idea of the number of flights using the airspace. This can be done by getting aerodrome movements from those aerodromes within the control area, which should help NATS plan how they will meet the demand in a realistic way.

Details of the Olympic restrictions start on page 5; also published here is the up-to-date situation on the N-register, which was discussed at a meeting in the office here on February between myself, our Chairman George Done, and our President, Lord Stevens. Lord Stevens is particularly concerned about third country operations and about the IMC rating – also covered in these pages – and is raising these issues in the House of Lords. On February 16th we had an AOPA Executive Committee meeting, followed by a meeting with representatives of Jeppesen, who are very keen to do some promotion with AOPA. Something may come of this; watch this space.

On the 17th I attended the SESAR deployment funding workshop in Brussels. It is clear that funding will be a major issue in SESAR's development, and I have been able to impress upon the European Commission that GA needs to be treated separately from CAT on the funding issue, because of the lack of positive business cases for GA in SESAR. The EC acknowledges this and agrees that it needs to consider how it will deal with GA in the future. More work to be



done on this.

On the 26th we had the AOPA Members Working Group meeting at White Waltham. We had another positive set of discussions with members about some of the issues facing GA. Focus for our efforts must be the strengthening and expansion of our regional representatives network, which is key to other programmes like the

Wings Scheme and the Mentoring Scheme.

Two days later we had an internal IAOPA meeting to discuss SESAR and the different work packages that are being developed. SESAR is very complex and IAOPA is involved in 48 separate work packages. It's important that everyone involved knows AOPA policy and sticks to the same overarching brief. Our lead men on SESAR are Dr Michael Erb of AOPA Germany and Ben Stanley of AOPA UK, and they are doing an excellent job. SESAR hasn't intruded on many GA pilots' radar yet, but believe me, it will.

On March 1st I participated in the Air Space Strategy Group meeting at the CAA in Kingsway. This is the group that looks at developments coming out of Europe which may affect the way the UK uses its airspace. Discussion centred on the Single European Sky rules of the air, and on removing parts of Class F airspace, which ICAO says should only have been imposed as a temporary measure – as a GA issue this means more airspace reverting to class G but it's amazing what could slip through if you're not watching.

To Budapest on March 3rd for the two-day high-level conference on the Single European Sky. Main focus of the discussions was the Air Traffic Management (ATM) master plan, SESAR priorities and the role of Functional Airspace Blocks. Vice President of the commission Siim Kallas gave a political view of SES and the need for a global ATM framework. While they talked of network managers, performance plans and stakeholder groups, there was no specific mention of GA, and I was able to stress that aviation is more than just airlines and the military. They're fairly nonplussed when I



aircraft – flight plans must be filed and adhered to, radios and transponders must be carried.

The March meeting featured Robert Raine, Director of Olympic Security at the Home Office; John Parkinson, Head of Airports Policy at the DfT; Phil Roberts, Assistant Director of the CAA's Airspace Policy Directorate; and Brendan Kelly, Head of Operational Policy at NATS. They were given a rough ride, with many in the

Left: the DfT's John Parkinson (left) and the CAA's Phil Roberts don't look too happy about it either

audience saying the restrictions seemed arbitrary in scope, based on no understandable risk assessment, poorly thought-out and designed to counter a non-existent threat.

Robert Raine said the terrorist threat level is defined as 'severe', which means it is highly likely that attacks are being planned. The affected area would be, he said, a 'known environment' in which everything would be identified. Its size was dictated by the time needed to respond to any incursion by unknown traffic. While he didn't go into what that response would be, there was loose talk afterwards of Awacs, Typhoons and Apaches – time to →

bang this particular drum; many of them would like us to go away, and the airlines in particular would bully us right out of the air, using regulatory tools to do so.

While there I was able to chat to Matthew Baldwin, who has taken over from Daniel Calleja as EC head of air-transport; Matthew has come from the EC's trade department. Funnily enough, having Brits in high places can be a mixed blessing. I've found that some are overly keen to be seen as 'good Europeans' and demonstrate this by ensuring they do nothing that might advantage Britain. I hope Matthew Baldwin will be as even-handed as possible.

On the 7th I met with Ofcom, who are consulting again on the proposed changes to charges for radio – as explained elsewhere in these pages. We remain opposed to the so-called Administrative Incentive Pricing, but I think AOPA has made the best of a very bad job here; the charges will be far lower than originally proposed. It's another charge for aerodromes which will be passed on, and in that sense it's a new tax.

That afternoon I went along to the DfT to hear their Olympic airspace proposals, mentioned above, and the following day I went with our Chairman George Done to the British Business and General Aviation conference in St Albans. This is always a good opportunity for networking, although this year I was unable to stay for the entire day as I had an evening appointment in Schiphol with AOPA Netherlands, who wanted to discuss the N-register issue. They have made sterling efforts to interest Dutch MPs in this, and I congratulate them on it.

On the 9th I went to 'ATC Global' in Amsterdam – this is a sort of Friedrichshafen for air traffic controllers, and I was able to meet with various people who have an interest in the changes that are going on in ATM. ATC Global is the showcase for new ATC systems and all the main players are there. SESAR and Eurocontrol had a large presence, and I joined Michael Erb, Ben Stanley, Craig Spence of AOPA US to discuss the proposals currently under discussions – proposals which seem to change every day. All of this is incredibly complex, involving as it does 67 ATC centres in Europe which must be integrated on a

functional, technological, regulatory and operational level, with buy-in from every country and its various agencies and authorities, from the airlines, the aircraft and avionics manufacturers – there are 36 different types of ATC system which must somehow be made to work together, and integrated with NexGen in the United States. I'm afraid the end result will be that a lot of the small technology companies exhibiting at ATC Global will be forced out of the market. In major integrations it tends to be the big beasts who come out on top – Lockheed Martin, Thales, Airbus and Boeing. Their imperatives are to get the maximum number of large jets into the air, and that's not necessarily a good thing for GA.

On March 10th I went to a meeting of the EASA Advisory Body in Cologne. The main concern of the group – again – is EASA fees and charges. One large UK engine manufacturer said that they had thought the UK CAA was an expensive regulator, but EASA fees and charges has seen a doubling of what they pay for regulation. If proposed increases are approved, they will see a further 30% increase. The big concern is the lack of transparency on fees and charges. It was reported that EASA did not even understand that the EAB has to be formally consulted on charges! The new tariffs are due to be in place by 2012, and it seems that political hands have been at work as it appears the most favoured option would have the least impact on US businesses. This is probably linked to the first Bilateral agreement, which has now been signed. We are at least forcing EASA to understand that the role of the Advisory Body is to scrutinise its accounts, and the basis for its fees and charges.

EASA's head of rule making gave a short update on how the Agency is trying to improve the way it handles its rulemaking tasks. I again made the point that the basis of all good rulemaking is good quality data, which is largely absent from EASA's deliberations on GA. The response was that the intention is to use existing data from those states which have data available.

Next day I went back to the DfT for an update on EASA developments, mainly FCL and the technicalities of restructuring the

CAA's licensing department. We don't yet know when they can publish material which has not yet been released by Europe, and Lasors will need to be rewritten again, all before April 2012. In the CAA's medical department Sally Evans has done a great deal of work to ensure that LAPL medicals remain subject to an assessment rather than an examination which in the UK could be done by your GP. It appears that only the UK will be using the GP route, and the CAA is busy writing the AMC material which, once accepted, will be available for the rest of Europe to use if they wish.

It was pointed out in reply to my question that the Standardised European Rules of the Air 'Part A' consultation has not actually gone away, as we had believed. The text has merely been frozen until the second shoe drops – the 'Part B' consultation, covering air traffic services, is still following the EASA NPA process. To explain, Part A was to do with the airborne equipment, and we ended up with a text which did minimal damage to GA. We thought it was done and dusted, and not too bad. But now we learn that Part B may affect Part A, which may have to be amended. You dodge a bullet, and they find a way of taking another shot. AOPA will be watching your back.

We had a Future Airspace Strategy meeting on the 14th. This was a workshop hosted by the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy, following up on the recent consultation on the future of airspace in the UK. The attendees were grouped around eight tables, each one discussing a particular issue associated with airspace, from regulation to equipment to safety to efficiency – not forgetting the environment. AOPA asked for positive business cases to support mandatory equipment requirements, plus funding where no positive business case can be made. I also pointed out that when it comes to the deployment stage, co-ordination and synchronisation will be critical. The EC accepts that if there is no positive business case for GA but we have to carry the equipment anyway, there should be some way of alleviating the pain. Getting that recognition is good – getting the money is a different kettle of fish.

Martin Robinson



→ brush up on your interception procedures.

For the CAA, Phil Roberts said they had worked very hard to make the prohibited zone at the centre as small as possible, and it largely comprised Class A airspace in which there was little or no VFR traffic anyway. The duration of the restriction – two months – was decided upon because they didn't want to cause confusion by lifting

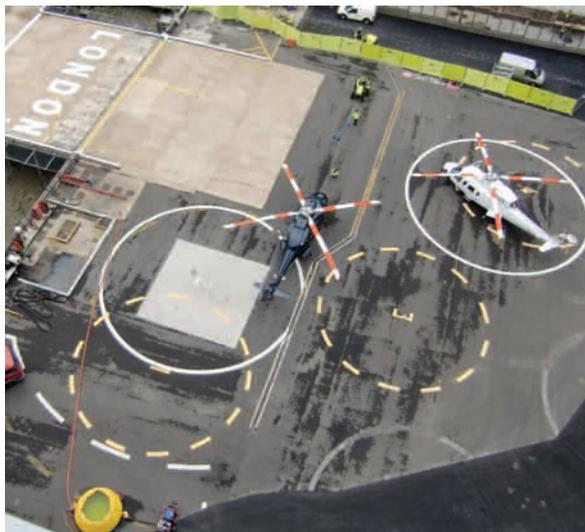
and re-imposing restrictions. Some additional restrictions would be imposed by Notam, and discussions would be held with inspection aircraft to allow them special access along their required routes. For the avoidance of confusion, they had tried to use established chart features to demarcate the affected areas. Airfields in the prohibited zone would be able to arrange for their current entry and exit routes to be used to get in and out, while a special meeting was to be held with Battersea Heliport, at the centre of the prohibited area, to decide whether it could stay in business.

On behalf of NATS, Brendan Kelly said they were making improvements to Apex to make it easier to use, and they were planning Apex education programmes in the coming year. There will be no opportunity to file a VFR flight plan by fax, by phone, or while airborne. NATS is setting up a reception system to process the enormous number of flight plans they expect to get, and staffing requirements for it would, he thought, be adequate for the task. "We cannot say exactly what that demand will be," he said, "but there will be a finite capacity, and it could be that at peak times access will not be granted." Those whose flight plans were accepted would be given a discrete code to use on first contact with ATC, which would have to be within plus or minus 30 minutes of the stated time. All aircraft would be obliged to stick to their filed route. No procedures would be established for radio failure, other than stay out. Inside the restricted area, only a Basic service would be on offer. Special VFR would not be possible on the often-used Burnham-Ascot short cut in the west of the prohibited area. He reiterated: "Access will be refused at periods of maximum demand. It could be at the flight plan filing stage, or it could be refused on first contact with ATC."

Separate meetings are being planned to discuss access to Battersea Heliport, and infrastructure flights – pipeline or cable inspection – and helicopter operations in the restricted area, where multiple off-airport stops may have to be made.

There were questions on how abuse of flight plans would be treated; people may file on the off-chance and create problems

when they didn't show. This was one of many things that had not been considered, and some thought will be given to it. Similarly, access for foreign flights with no access to Apex had not been thought through, and will now be considered. But Mr Kelly said classic aircraft without radios or transponders, such as those based at Old Warden, would be able to use the restricted area – special arrangements would be made for them. The CAA's Phil Roberts stressed that there were many gaps in their knowledge, particularly about farm strips and microlight sites in the restricted area. "You people have much more information than we have," he said.



Top: London's Battersea Heliport sits at the centre of the Prohibited Area
Above: arrangements must be made for classic aircraft with no transponder

"Together with NATS and the MoD we will be gathering as much information as we can, and we will be visiting airfields and giving briefings to explain the position to flying clubs and pilots in and around the restricted areas."

Discussion again turned to the possibility of refusal of access. Both Martin Robinson and Ian Seager of Flyer stressed that this was the nub of the matter. If access could be guaranteed, and other relevant issues could be cleared up, then the restrictions would be a nuisance but nothing more. Brendan Kelly identified the main choke points as firstly, handling the flight plans, and secondly, coping with the traffic in the air. On the first, he said they believed they

would have enough staff to do the job. Extra people were being recruited. Similarly, enough air traffic controllers should be available, with the correct qualifications. It was pointed out that there are only six ATC stations at Farnborough, but Mr Kelly said it would be controlled from elsewhere as well. Access would probably be granted on a first-come, first-served basis because it was difficult to see how any other system would work. Questions were asked as to whether multiple flight plans could be filed, or whether schools could book block flights for instructional purposes; these are matters for further discussion.

It was pointed out that general aviation should have been involved in consultation from the start, and that GA – particularly helicopters – should have been seen as a solution to some security issues, and not a problem in themselves. No access to the Olympic site by helicopter means that high-profile terrorist targets will have to crawl along the roads, some of which are marked with special Olympic lanes, presenting opportunities for terrorists. Richard Raine said they were aware of the ground-level threats and wouldn't be making it easy for anybody.

Summing up, Martin Robinson said: "We must have guarantees from NATS of adequate service levels to assure access. It's clear that the minimum of two hours notice is a filter for flow control, and we must guard against controllers deciding their own capacity – after all, it's only a Basic service. We would rather see controllers being under-utilised than have flying schools turning away customers. We must also ensure that, if there is a serious infringement, this does not become a blueprint for the future. There are many other issues to be negotiated on, but we have to accept we're part of this security operation, however well-grounded it is, and make the best of a bad situation. We are continuing discussions with the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy on what might be done to reduce the impact."

Details of the restrictions, are now available on www.airspacesafety.com/olympics. As well as the main restrictions in the south-east of England, other venues throughout the UK will be subject to temporary restrictions notified by notam. The umbrella group, the Airspace Safety Initiative, is seeking 'Olympic airspace ambassadors' to distribute literature and assist with the briefing programme. The services of AOPA's regional representatives have been offered, subject to a full explanation of what will be required, so members should be able to contact them for more details. ■

TRANSAIR Pilot's Flight Equipment



Aircraft Instruments

Transair offer a large range of TSO and Non TSO aircraft instruments from leading manufacturers! just visit our website. www.transair.co.uk

Full product range at www.transair.co.uk



Shell Aviation

Piston Engine Oils



Aeroshell oil help protect your engine faster than any other oil, from cold starts to high ambient temperatures!

80, W80, W80 Plus, 100, W100, W100 Plus, 10W-40, 15W-50, Sport Plus 4 & New Sport Plus 2

Per Litre Case of 12
From **£5.99** Inc VAT **£58.99** Inc VAT

Turbine Engine Oils



Aeroshell's collaboration with turbine engine manufacturers has led to the development of a complete range of turbine engine oils, from mineral oil formulations through to leading edge, fully synthetic hindered esters.

Turbine Oil 390, 500, 555, 560 and 750

Per Quart Case of 12
From **£15.49** Inc VAT **£168.99** Inc VAT

Greases & Lubricants



Aeroshell have a complete range of aviation greases and lubricants designed especially to fill almost every lubrication need within the aviation community!

Aeroshell Lubricants
From **£43.49** Inc VAT

Aeroshell Greases
From **£10.49** Inc VAT

David Clark H10-13.4



Passive Headset
1721 **£215.83** Inc VAT Exc VAT

Bose A20 Headset



£855.00 Inc VAT
From **£712.50** Exc VAT

Garmin aera 500 GPS



£499.00 Inc VAT
2500 **£415.83** Exc VAT

Airbox Freedom Clarity



£599.00 Inc VAT
3640 **£499.17** Exc VAT

Red Box Power Units



£996.00 Inc VAT
FROM **£830.00** Exc VAT

icom A6E Transceiver



£249.95 Inc VAT
3005 **£208.29** Exc VAT

Becker AR-6201 Transceiver



£1200.00 Inc VAT
6201 **£1000.00** Exc VAT

Kannad XS-4 GPS PLB



£204.99 Inc VAT
3181 **£170.82** Exc VAT

Transair Aircrew Lifejackets



£64.49 Inc VAT
From **£53.74** Exc VAT

Transair Military Flightsuits



£79.95 Inc VAT
6975 **£79.95** Inc VAT

Pooleys 2011 Flight Guides



From **£25.95**

Aircraft Fire Extinguishers



From **£194.00** Inc VAT

New Aircraft Maintenance Section

See www.transair.co.uk for details



Visit our **NEW Aviation Showroom at Shoreham**



Shoreham AIRPORT

Gloucester AIRPORT

Wycombe AIR PARK

London VICTORIA SW1

Tel: 01273 466000

www.transair.co.uk

Hands across the ocean

America and European Union officially concluded a long-awaited bilateral aviation safety agreement (BASA) designed to make government oversight of the aviation industry more efficient and to pave the way for future transatlantic regulatory cooperation.

The BASA, signed on March 15th, allows the reciprocal acceptance FAA and EASA certification and oversight of civil aviation products and repair stations. The US and the EU specifically agreed to recognise each other's 'findings of compliance and approvals.' This means, for example, that the FAA can determine a US repair station is eligible for an EASA approval to work on European registered products without a separate inspection by European regulators.

The BASA is good news for the maintenance industry. Duplication of oversight was a real fear, and the BASA takes a lot of expense and bureaucracy out of the equation. The two sides have agreed that their standards and technical requirements are sufficiently compatible for one to approve the other's work. Importantly, it makes provision for annexes to be developed and added by a Bilateral Oversight Board, leaving the door open for agreements in other areas, including flight crew licensing.

EASA's proposals on flight crew licensing were due to be passed by the European Parliament on March 17th despite the profound misgivings of many MEPs over issues such as the Agency's attack on the N-register. In the event the vote was postponed because the documents had not been translated. Attempting to influence MEPs on these matters is largely a waste of time because they are powerless to amend the proposals – they can only accept or reject the entire FCL package. The parliamentarians are under enormous pressure to accept it because Europe's deadline for FCL implementation is April 2012, and national authorities and

governments need as much time as possible to set up their systems.

This process starkly illustrates deficiencies in European lawmaking which are leading to the rushed creation and implementation of bad law. Firstly, the deadline is entirely arbitrary, yet it is treated as Holy Writ. Secondly, all the power lies with the European Commission, and elected MEPs can be disregarded as the EC sees fit. There is to be some improvement in this situation from April 1st when under the terms of the Lisbon Treaty the European Parliament is to be given powers to amend legislation rather than simply throwing it all out, baby, bathwater and all.

EASA's proposals to hammer the N-register operator in Europe have been put back to 2014 and may now be subject to bilateral negotiations.

IAOPA joined with the European Business Aircraft Association and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association to lobby for a workable solution to the third-country issue. In a joint approach to the EASA Comitology Committee's December meeting, signed by EBAA President and CEO Brian Humphries, GAMA President and CEO Peter Bunce and IAOPA's Martin Robinson the organisations say the requirements for transferring a third-country licence to an EASA licence are not viable for many pilots. We have proposed instead a validation process which 'grandfathers' existing license holders,

which would actually deliver what the EASA Basic Regulation requires in respect of oversight. We support the idea of having the issues settled by bilateral agreement, but such agreements are unlikely to be in force by April 2012.

There are about 10,000 European pilots currently operating with FAA tickets on N-registered aircraft. FAA figures are a poor guide; they show that UK pilots have obtained 20,851 FAA licenses or ratings, although it is not known how many are currently active. The figure for Switzerland is 6,258, for the Netherlands 4,024, for Italy 4,118, for Germany 17,461, for Austria 3,221 and for France 6,140. Every European country has a significant quota

of FAA licence holders – in some cases outnumbering their own domestic issue. They use engineering shops, airfields and facilities, they buy fuel, they inject millions into the GA industry – but EASA's simplistic contention that they'll all switch to European registers is nonsense. Many can not, more will not, and the loss will be a grave blow to the industry.

In 2005 EASA's Executive Director Patrick Goudou promised he would attack the third-

country registration issue by 'making sure there were no advantages to being on the N-register'. He has found this too hard, and has gone for the destructive option. Martin Robinson says: "His proposals will cost pilots millions of euros, lead to redundancies in the GA maintenance and support industry and probably drive out of the business those pilots who cannot afford the time and money it takes to get two instrument ratings and keep up two licenses and medicals."

The newly-signed BASA, however, affords us a ray of hope. Martin adds: "This is a very good agreement, and it does away with the requirements originally proposed by politicians on both sides for all repair stations to be overseen only by their own side. Both Europe and America have given some ground, and the signing of this document is evidence of a heartening level of goodwill on both sides. It may pave the way for agreements on licensing, but there are several hurdles to overcome. EASA's rules on third country licenses will come into force in 2014, and we need to know what provision is being made for them to be amended." ■



Above: EASA Executive Director Patrick Goudou has chosen the destructive option to deal with third country registrations

NATS wins Aware award

National Air Traffic Services Ltd has won an award for its partnership with Airbox, which produced the Aware, the low-cost avionics box that helps pilots avoid infringing controlled airspace. NATS was given the award for service provision at an international air traffic control exhibition in Amsterdam. The award was collected by NATS' Chief Executive Richard Deakin.

The Aware, which costs around £150 alerts pilots with increasing urgency to the risk of infringing controlled airspace, and AOPA fully supports its use. AOPA gives away an Airbox Aware to a new member in a monthly draw.

*The January winner of the AOPA Airbox Aware was Jean Haythornethwaite, pictured right.



EASA: 'We support the IMC rating...'

EASA is now saying it supports the UK's IMC rating and has done so all along, but blames the FCL.008 Working Group for dealing it a death blow.

In reply to investigations by a national newspaper journalist, the Agency wrote: "EASA is well aware that the future of the IMC rating has been an issue of great concern for thousands of private pilots in the UK. I want to reassure you that the Agency's objective is not to abolish it. On the contrary, we want to allow this rating to continue which is why rulemaking task FCL.008 'Qualifications for flying in Instrument Meteorological Conditions' was established."

The Agency refers to FCL.008's terms of reference, which specifically mention the IMC rating, and goes on to say that FCL.008, which was drawn from all sectors of general aviation, chose to propose a new rating, the En Route Instrument Rating, which would constitute a modular step towards a full IR.

In the very near future you will get the chance to tell EASA that FCL.008 got it wrong on the IMC rating, that its deliberations were deficient and its conclusions utterly inaccurate, and that the IMCR is a life-saving qualification which should not be taken away from the GA community in Britain because of the comments of an unrepresentative few. EASA will soon be issuing a Notice of Proposed Amendment on instrument flying qualifications, and your opinion on it will be invited. If, as expected, it ignores or dismisses the IMC rating, there must be hell to pay.

As has been rehearsed many times in these pages, FCL.008 was misinformed that the IMC rating was "an Instrument Rating with 20 percent of the training," and never gave it the consideration it needed. AOPA UK was not invited to sit on FCL.008 but tried to influence it through AOPA Germany, who had a representative on board; he felt unable to press the case for the IMC rating, however, when the British delegates on the Working Group declined to support him.

The situation is rendered all the more bizarre by the fact that those groups who were represented on FCL.008 now say they fully support the IMC rating. The CAA, whose representative largely sat on his hands during the five FCL.008 meetings, has responded to AOPA's pro-IMC campaign with robust and meaningful support, and has wrung from EASA the promise of grandfather rights for IMCR

holders. It is difficult now to find anyone who does not support the rating – why, then, are we in imminent danger of losing it?

This issue brought AOPA its biggest-ever postbag, including letters from scores of pilots who say the IMC rating saved their lives. For greatest effect, all must respond when EASA's NPA comes out.

In its appraisal of EASA's intentions on FCL issues, the CAA says: "In discussions with UK representatives and the CAA, the Agency has said that there should be a means to take a credit to obtain the new European rating. EASA has also indicated that, if the new European rating is more

restrictive than the UK IMC rating, existing holders of the IMC rating might be granted a restricted form of the full IR that would confer the same privileges as the existing UK IMC rating. (Such a rating would also be subject to the restriction that it could only be used to fly UK-registered aeroplanes in UK airspace – as is the case now with the IMC rating)."

If after April 2012, some UK pilots are flying with a UK-only rating designed solely to save their lives, why could the same privilege not be extended to new pilots? The majority of IMC rating holders do not feel a burning need for a full IR – they don't have pressurised aircraft, oxygen or de-icing, their flying patterns do not call for access to the airways, and above all, they don't have the time to study for the seven examinations which will be required for both the European IR and the En Route Instrument Rating. Only an IMC rating equivalent can meet their needs, and AOPA's campaign to save the rating will continue.

It is nonsense for EASA to infer that it is bound by the findings of its Working Group FCL.008. Other working groups have found their proposals twisted, ignored and amended; FCL.008 is nothing more than a

fig leaf behind which the Agency is ducking.

AOPA's President Lord Stevens is to raise the issue in the House of Lords with a series of questions on this issue. Two of his questions read:

"The Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC) Rating is a national rating mechanism which has for the past forty years applied within the UK. The goal of the IMC rating is to ensure that private pilots are able to fly safely without being dependent upon good visibility, through providing instrument training enabling the pilot to steer and land an aircraft using

instruments alone. This capability, whilst having been attributed to enhancing safety standards within the UK, is only a national mechanism and is therefore not ordinarily recognised outside of the UK. Under proposals to be implemented by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) aimed at providing for an EU-wide standardised safety mechanism, any pilot wishing to fly an aircraft in Europe, no matter what the country of registration, would require an EASA licence and if applicable an EASA Instrument Rating. The new licence will result in the IMC being

scrapped with no comparable replacement being offered and no mechanism in place to allow this national system to be appended to the legislation. Will Her Majesty's Government detail their position on the importance of the IMC rating mechanism and what representation has been made in relation to ensuring that the high safety record we have in the UK is not undermined as a result of this standardisation.

"To ask Her Majesty's Government whether an assessment has been made as to the impact on the British economy of the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) move to implement an EU-wide safety standards mechanism for light aircraft. It is noted that the industry not only risks losing income from the fall in demand for pre-owned American registered aircraft but also risks losing revenues, which have previously amounted to between £1.5 and £2 million a year, from training for the British Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC) rating." ■



Above left: Working Group's terms of reference specifically mentioned the IMC rating

Above: AOPA President Lord Stevens when he was Metropolitan Police Commissioner

How to really screw things up

Once upon a time – before 2005 – it was possible to carelessly dip a wing into controlled airspace and hear nothing more about it; if ATC noticed, the worst that might happen was a mild on-air rebuke. Certainly no formal report would be passed up the food chain. Then, however, National Air Traffic Services instituted a policy of reporting every infringement, whether by six miles or six inches – in order, they said, to get a fuller picture of what was going on. AOPA began getting calls from worried members who'd been told they'd be reported with a view to further action, even when their

transgression amounted to less than the width of a chinagraph line on a half mil.

In the event, few of these 'minor infringements' led to pilots being dragged through the streets in chains, although the chorus of muttering about why NATS was bothering itself with such trivia has not been wholly stilled. Many pilots still don't realise that any infringement, however minor, can result in major disruption to commercial air transport, triggering knock-on delays, suspension of airport operations and serious costs to airlines.

The reason is that air traffic controllers are constrained to keep commercial traffic five miles from you laterally and 5,000 feet vertically. You don't have to put more than a toe across the line to cause some serious avoiding action. But here's the fix: if ATC knows who you are and can contact you, the five-mile 5,000-foot requirement is lifted. So even if you infringe, they can keep commercial traffic humming along while they sort you out.

For your part, if you're anywhere near controlled airspace, you should be talking to somebody who's in the radar loop. Get your transponder on, Mode C or S if you have it, and make full use of the 'listening squawks' and their accompanying frequencies – these are the transponder codes you put in when you're flying close to an airport; you then listen out on the relevant frequency and if you're in danger of infringing, you'll get a timely call from ATC. These listening squawks are really useful and they're spreading. Normally you won't have to speak to anybody – but just remember when you're leaving the listening squawk area, return your transponder to 7000 as well as switching radio frequency. (This has been a bit of an issue). If you even suspect you've infringed, or you're 'temporarily uncertain of position' close to Injun Territory, get onto

ATC, or D&D on 121.5, straight away.

There is now a heightened risk of prosecution for infringements of Class A airspace which cause interference with CAT. There have been several major changes at the CAA's enforcement branch and in the legal department which appear to have set us back slightly in the campaign for greater flexibility in prosecution decisions. Back in 2003 AOPA represented a member who infringed a TRA at Elvington, near York. He was one of four to infringe on that day and he was the least

culpable – he just clipped the area – but he was the only one the CAA could catch because he had his transponder on. Not only was he prosecuted, but there was a serious legal threat that he might be financially liable for the losses incurred from the cancellation of the air show display. For various reasons this didn't happen – but one day it might.

If you infringe, NATS starts the hare running when the controller files a Form 939 which goes to the CAA's enforcement branch. The ARE investigates infringements and decides what action to recommend. NATS, however, has no say in whether pilots are prosecuted or not. The CAA legal department applies the same criteria as the Crown Prosecution Service before deciding whether to go to court. No

other body has any role in CAA prosecutions. Following the Elvington case, AOPA managed to convince the CAA that the risk of pilots

switching off transponders for fear of prosecution was great enough for them to show some flexibility in this area. The ARE, headed by Ian Weston, and the legal department, under Rupert Britton, responded well, and it was made clear that proper transponder use would count in a pilot's favour, and make a retraining requirement more likely than prosecution.

Recently Ian Weston has left the CAA, as has Rupert Britton. AOPA's Martin Robinson was discussing an infringement case with new people, and it was made clear that attitudes are not the same. In the case under discussion, a pilot with an incorrectly set altimeter had climbed into Class A airspace. It was inadvertent, he had his transponder on, and Martin Robinson thought it should have been dealt with by a caution, and a requirement to pay for additional training in navigation and altimeter setting procedures. The decision, however, had been to prosecute.

Martin says: "It's clear to me that the new ARE people have a different attitude, and one which is not consistent with other parts of the CAA, as it was made clear that ARE reserves the right to determine whether to prosecute or not, based on the evidence."

The ARE is the only CAA department that is externally funded – the Department for Transport picks up the tab, but it is under budget pressures and it wants the CAA to take over, raising questions about where the money will come from. Court costs could be seen as a

useful way of defraying expenses; the risk of prosecution may be further affected.

Martin adds: "I hope those with influence in this area will join me in stressing that the old ways were not bad ways; in the meantime, pilots can help themselves by doing regular FREDA checks. Had the prosecuted pilot done so, he would have avoided the court. And for heaven's sake, keep your transponder on – the risks of flying in 'stealth mode' far outweigh the risk of a court appearance."

Farnborough LARS is still issuing 'airspace proximity warnings' but is no longer counting them as "infringements prevented", which was always a bit of a con. The example of one pilot is not atypical – Jonathan Smith, a PPL for six years and a volunteer at Old Warden and Fairford for 28 years, was flying a Cub out of Halton when just south of Wycombe, ATC warned him that on his present track he risked infringing the London Zone. Now Smith knew exactly where he was and had no intention of infringing the London Zone. "I gave them some attitude," Jonathan says, "but that proximity alert might be the difference between infringement and safe flight, so I shouldn't have bridled at it."

Jonathan Smith is NATS Infringements Lead, whose job it is to get GA infringements down. ■

Keith Negal

The world of microlighting has recently lost one of its prime movers and shakers. Keith Negal, President of the British Microlight Aircraft Association, passed away peacefully at the age of 62 in February as a result of a brain tumour. AOPA Chairman, George Done, says: "As my opposite number in a colleague association, it was inevitable that we shared thoughts on common problems from time to time, and throughout he was friendly, constructive and straightforward. It was always a pleasure to meet him – he will be sadly missed."



You don't have to put more than a toe across the line to cause some serious avoiding action

The new ARE people have a different attitude, and one which is not consistent with other parts of the CAA

How long does a seat belt last?

*AOPA Chairman **George Done** asks why we are being told to replace seat belts to a manufacturer's schedule*

Let's rephrase this question – for how long do the seat belts, or passenger and crew restraints as some manufacturers refer to them, in your GA aircraft continue to serve the purpose for which they were designed? Amsafe, one of the world's largest and oldest manufacturers of commercial and general aviation aircraft seat belts, say that they do not impose life-limit requirements for their restraint systems, and also "...our maintenance manuals provide inspection criteria to define acceptable/unacceptable wear criteria and describe the replacement requirement as 'on condition'..." A random check with maintenance personnel working for some of the UK's major airlines confirms that replacement on condition in the commercial air transport world is indeed the order of the day. Bearing in mind that a typical B747 may be in the air more than 14 hours out of the 24 in a day for every day of its working life, say 20 years, a life expectancy of your typical airline passenger seat belt could exceed 100,000 hours.

Translate this across to an average GA aeroplane and you might reasonably expect, given normal use by passengers and crew, never to have to replace a seat belt for the whole flying life of the aircraft. There are plenty of Piper PA28 and Cessna 172 type aircraft flying around that are now 40 years old, so at an average annual usage of 250, that's only of the order of 10,000 hours total, a mere tenth of the commercial big boys. And rear seats may be occupied and seat belts in use for only a fraction of that.

Thus, it is a complete mystery why a manufacturer and type certificate holder may stipulate, as Cessna does for some of its aircraft, that seat belts must be replaced at a calendar life of 10 years. It is a large task to obtain the service manuals for all types and check the requirements for servicing seat belts, but a typical example dating from a 2002 revision of an earlier manual stipulates that for Restraint Assembly Pilot Co-pilot and Passenger Seats "10 years" is the replacement time, and "No" is the answer to overhaul. Pretty unequivocal – but information from maintainers is that this requirement is not consistent across all Cessna aircraft types, and not even across the same type in some cases. It is very difficult to envisage what it is about Cessna aircraft that causes seat belts to end their useful life after 10

years, or approximately 2,500 hours, when the seat belt manufacturer designed these for two orders of magnitude longer life (maybe it was something to do with the spate of frivolous litigious claims following accidents that plagued GA aircraft manufacturers a few decades ago?) You might think, well, surely, the aircraft manufacturers are being unduly pessimistic, so let's go with the seat belt makers. But, in the UK anyway, the LAMP (CAP 766 Light Aircraft Maintenance



Above: seat belts in GA aircraft get a tiny proportion of the wear they are subjected to on commercial jets

Programme – Aeroplanes, which now accords with EASA Part M) indicates, firmly reiterated in Airworthiness Notice 2009/18, that the more restrictive requirement must apply.

But what might the risk be of replacing on condition rather than at a relatively short calendar life? John Thorpe, immediate past Chief Executive of GASCo, has collected a huge volume of accident statistics spanning about 30 years. There were, for aeroplanes, 369 accidents with 654 fatalities. Filtering out those involving 'Rescue and Survival' led to just 34 over

the period, and of these, in only one case was the condition of the belt/harness received a mention. This was one in which it was noted in the accident report that an elastomeric bush was missing off one of the lap strap buckles – but this omission was in no way a contributory factor to the accident or to the possibility of survival. So, based on this trawl through the accident statistics, the risk to safety of life of non-replacement of a perfectly serviceable seat belt is immeasurably small.

The cost to owners of addressing this non-existent risk is, on the other hand, only too easily measurable. The problem appeared on the scene back in 2009 and since then, many owners have spent of the order of £1,000 per aircraft to replace typically four seat belts. Since the same issue is evident in other European states, notably Sweden, the unnecessary overall spend in Europe could well be of magnitude one million US dollars.

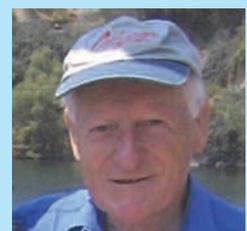
Whether or not it was intended to address this and/or similar issues, EASA introduced in 2008 an additional clause into Part M (AMC M.A.302 (d), Aircraft Maintenance Programme – reliability programmes, paragraph 7) that allows for "Escalation of the interval for certain tasks based on reliability data or other supporting information". Much of the above represents the reliability data mentioned, and AOPA is now working on an engineering case that can be proposed by a CAMO, operator or owner to the CAA ("the competent authority") for approval and embodiment into the LAMP. Hopefully, a successful outcome will be achieved without too much further delay, with the result made accessible on the AOPA website www.aopa.co.uk. ■

Jack Wells moves to VP

Jack Wells has retired from the AOPA Board owing to ill health and has been appointed an Honorary Vice President.

Jack became involved with AOPA soon after retiring from the Civil Service in 1988 joining the Board in 1993, being Vice Chairman from 1996 to 2000. He held a PPL for 28 years from 1970 and owned shares successively in a Rallye, a PA140 and a Robin Aiglon when based at Fairoaks, having escaped from the clutches of Doug Arnold at Blackbushe. He enjoyed continental touring, flying to most West European countries. Having held a senior post in the Civil Service, his professional experience proved useful when attending meetings at the Houses of Lords and Commons on a range of issues relating to general aviation. He sat on a number of AOPA Committees, the then Customs Air Transport Industry Consultative Committee and the CAA Finance Advisory Committee.

He was heavily involved with David Ogilvy in setting up the General Aviation Awareness Campaign, (GAAC) which later became the Council, from its foundation in 1992. It enabled coordinated involvement of the various GA associations on matters relating to smaller aerodromes, especially on planning issues which concern the whole GA community. As the GAAC Secretary he covered the whole range of its activity.



'Simplified GAR' to come

The UK Border Agency is planning a number of changes to improve the efficiency of the handling of the General Aviation Reports we must file for flying abroad. UKBA sees the GAR form as one of the keys to its counter-terrorism agenda and is taking ownership of the GAR from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. It aims to make the GAR easier to fill in and easier to file – as well as reducing the number of fields to be filled in, all GARs will be submitted to a single point, and UKBA is working with AOPA to create a phone app which would allow GARs to be filed from a mobile phone. This is expected to be available in the summer.

Further the UKBA, together with the police, is launching 'Project Pegasus' at the beginning of April. This will formalise the already-established idea that general aviation is the 'eyes and ears' of the security services when it comes to suspicious activity in the GA field. It is an aviation version of the already-operating Project Kraken, through which yachties can get direct contact with the appropriate person in their local police force in order to report any untoward activity.

Marc Owen, Director of Central Region of UKBA, acknowledges the difficulty of policing activity in "a field with a windsock in it" as well as the requirement to have general aviation people on side. "Clearly there are opportunities for those who would circumvent our controls," he says, "and we must deal with the bad guys without getting in the way of the good guys, which is a difficult challenge."

The challenge is rendered even more sporting by the 20 percent budget cut UKBA is facing this year, so GA's help is needed more than ever.

UKBA knows it's difficult to police 'a field with a windsock'



Paying again for nothing

IAOPA-Europe is concerned at the cost to pilots of transferring licences to EASA and is asking authorities to issue new paperwork free of charge. From April next year, when EASA takes over responsibility for flight crew licensing, pilots will have to obtain EASA licences, and in some cases this is likely to cost them several hundred euros. In the case of Great Britain, because EASA does not recognise national licences issued by their Civil Aviation Authority, pilots will have to surrender their national licences – which are valid for life – and pay for JAA licences, which are valid for five years. The conversion currently costs £176, or over €200. When these JAA licences expire, they will have to convert them to EASA licences, which are once again valid for life. The proposed cost of this is not yet established. Martin Robinson says: "Collectively this is going to cost general aviation millions of euros, and it is unjust that pilots should have to pay it, especially at a time when activity is suppressed by the economic downturn. This is a bureaucratic change for the convenience of regulators. Effectively, they have changed the rules to force pilots to get new paperwork in order to carry on doing what they've been doing for years, while charging them excessive sums of money for new documents. No cost should fall on pilots who are forced to conform to old regulations written on new pieces of paper."

EASA fees 'hit safety'

EASA's ruinous fees and charges – about to rise by a further 30% – are impinging on safety, causing stagnation in GA and resulting in financial loss to engineers and avionics manufacturers. One example of many comes from an AOPA member whose group planned to upgrade their Seneca 1 by installing a second-hand Collins 101 HSI. The plan was to replace the old DI and link the HSI in with an existing Century II autopilot and Garmin 430. This would have safety benefits, as well as increased utility.

An avionics engineer agreed to do the work, which appeared to him to be very straightforward. Working with an electronics engineer, he surveyed the requirements and, working from the Collins installation manual, produced a CAD wiring diagram that ensured everything interconnected properly. Engineers were found to manufacture and install the bracket to mount the remote sensor in the tail of the aircraft.

The CAA, however, insisted that this was a major modification requiring a survey and design by their own people,

and an initial payment in excess of £3,500 would be required. Thus the cost of the installation became unviable, and the group were forced to abandon the idea.

An AOPA investigation found that the CAA had little influence on the matter; the work needed to be approved either directly by EASA or by an EASA-approved Design Organisation. An avionics engineer is only licensed to carry out work to approved data, not to develop that data. While it



Left: second-hand Collins 101 HSI installation became financially unviable due to EASA

was accepted that the installation of the HSI was a fairly straightforward task, the installation might vary from aircraft to aircraft, therefore previous permissions counted for nothing. Even if there had been an identical installation in an identical Seneca there might be issues over cost because the original Seneca owner would 'own' the mod. Furthermore, there was no comprehensive, centralised or common listing of such mods to which EASA could have access. The cost of approving such a modification was set by EASA, and all the money goes to them.

One member of the group said: "By insisting on this bureaucracy and its associated cost, the Agency is hardly enhancing flight safety. Neither we nor the engineers involved are cowboys, and we operate and maintain our aircraft to the highest professional standards. However we have to be realistic about how much money it is worth investing in this old aircraft – it is no longer viable."

AOPA Chairman George Done, who was asked for advice on the case, says:

"This is a good example of how EASA fails to address a potential safety enhancement and improvement through a combination of stupid bureaucracy and excessive cost." ■

September date for AOPA Bonus Day

By **Chris Royle**

Following the success of the Duxford AOPA Bonus Day in 2010, planning for the 2011 AOPA Bonus Day is now well under way. Whether you're a member or not, you're welcome to take part.

This year, the Imperial War Museum has very generously provided the use of the AirSpace Conference Centre for the day. Lectures and presentations will be given in the purpose-built Marshall auditorium, with refreshments and lunch being served in the adjacent Concorde meeting room.

There will be time to meet old and new friends, time for networking and to visit corporate members' displays. And all just a step away from the mezzanine viewing gallery overlooking the magnificent exhibits in the AirSpace hangar.

The morning will consist of a keynote presentation on the looming changes to FCL under EASA, given by Cliff Whittaker, Head of Licensing and Training Policy at the CAA, followed by question time on that topic.

After a buffet lunch, AOPA (UK) Chief Executive and European IAOPA Vice President Martin Robinson will give an overview of current and future issues affecting GA. There will then be time for a general discussion and an 'Ask AOPA' session where AOPA staff and members

involved in particular projects will be available to answer your questions.

A new feature for this year will be expert-led guided tours of the Museum in the morning and afternoon – perfect for either yourself or your guests while you are attending the presentations. It is intended to run one tour in the morning and one in the afternoon, each lasting about an hour.

Additionally, Classic Wings will be offering discounted flights in their de Havilland Rapide to attendees on the day. See www.duxfordflying.co.uk.

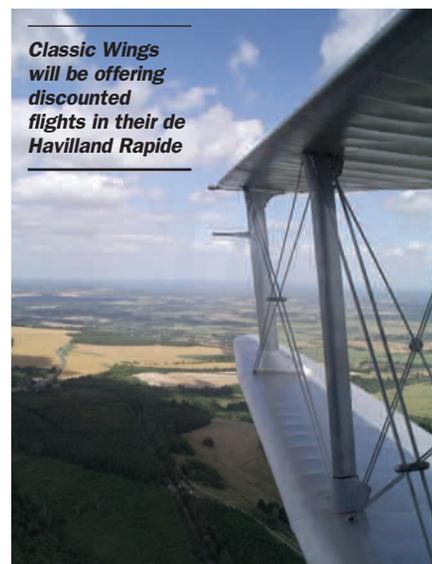
A ticket for the day, including admission

to the presentations, a buffet lunch, tea / coffee and discount entry to the museum will cost £20 per person. In addition, the discounted landing fee for all visiting aircraft will be £7.

If you would rather drive to the venue, there is easy access via the M11 and there is ample parking available.

More details will be posted on www.aopa.co.uk as they become available, including how to book a place and how to get a landing slot at Duxford. But for the time being, please make a note of the date in your diary – Saturday September 10th.

*Duxford Bonus Days – see page 42 ■



Classic Wings will be offering discounted flights in their de Havilland Rapide

TIME TO RENEW/REVALIDATE YOUR INSTRUCTOR RATING!!

Register now for the

AOPA FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR SEMINAR

JAR-FCL Flight Instructor Refresher Seminar
conducted by **AOPA** and approved by the CAA

Dates & Venues

19/20 July 2011

Booker

£225 for AOPA members

15/16 November 2011

Booker

£250 for non-members

20/21 March 2012

Bristol

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

The AOPA Maintenance Working Group

By *George Done*

The April 2009 issue of *General Aviation* included a report of a small meeting hosted by AOPA that took place in March. The attendees comprised two senior personnel from the CAA on the maintenance and airworthiness standards activity, two from the GA maintenance industry and George Done and Martin Robinson from AOPA representing aircraft owners. Subsequently, and partly as a result of that meeting, the CAA organised three seminars on EASA Part M aimed at informing representatives from Approved Maintenance Organisations and other interested parties of the state of play and latest developments at that time. This was reported in the October 2009 issue of *General Aviation*.

It subsequently transpired that the transition to EASA Part M continued to raise difficulties, particularly with the maintainers, and a further meeting was organised by AOPA in October 2010 at which it was firmly decided to hold similar meetings for the foreseeable future on a roughly quarterly

basis, the latest one having taken place in January 2011. A pattern was set for these meetings in which the maintainers and AOPA representatives met in the morning, with the CAA representatives joining them for lunch and for the afternoon meeting. Although, obviously, the morning meeting allowed the maintainers to agree on the relative importance of the agenda items for CAA attention in the afternoon, there are in fact several areas of discussion that concern maintainers and owners alone. These include an AOPA Code of Practice or Light Aircraft Maintenance Customer Commitment, pre-purchase inspections and dispute resolution.

Terms of reference have been agreed which appear in the separate box. The current members of the WG are Jim



McKenna, Head of Airworthiness Strategy and Policy and John Nicholas, Head of Applications and Approvals at the CAA, John Eagles of Air Stratus, Oaksey Park, Roger Kimbell of J & J Aircraft Services, Sibson, Paul Layzell of Touchdown Engineering, Old Buckenham, Paul Hendry-Smith of The Light Aircraft Company, Little Snoring and Mike Smart of Farley Farm for the maintainers, and George Done and Martin Robinson for AOPA. Sue Girdler of T G Aviation, Manston, will be joining the maintainers for the next meeting, and it is hoped to find an avionics and a helicopter expert will also be able to come along. Although the current membership includes three owners, it is hoped also to enlist one further independent owner.

So what has the WG been talking about? From the maintainers' point of view, of great importance is the cost of approvals, which inevitably has to be passed on to the owners. Also, and this has been a thorny topic for some considerable time, the consistency of approach of the CAA

Cost of approvals must be passed on to customers by maintenance organisations

surveyors who oversee almost every aspect of the maintainers activity, in particular the paperwork and administration. Examples of poor and even unsafe maintenance practice are fortunately extremely rare, considering the overall scale of the maintenance and engineering activity in GA, but the WG has recommended a greater visibility of enforcement action by the CAA. An associated topic is the submission of MoRs by maintenance organisations when previous maintenance deficiencies are uncovered, extending also to foreign registered aircraft when there is a serious safety issue (e.g. cracks found in a wing spar). Calendar life of components fitted to GA aircraft, in particular, that for seat belts (see separate article in this section) was raised at the CAA seminars on EASA Part M above and continues to cause considerable debate; practical solutions are difficult to finalise following the recent EASA audit of the CAA which has led to a decision to replace the LAMP in its current form, and also to revise the Generic Requirements that relate to calendar life.

● The CAA is considering holding half-day Roadshows on maintenance and engineering issues for aircraft owners for about 40 – 50 attendees and would like to hear from owners what topics they would like the presentation team to cover – please submit ideas to AOPA at george@aopa.co.uk. There will be more information emerging in the future from the Maintenance WG and in greater detail than in this article; this will be placed on the AOPA website www.aopa.co.uk ■



Maintainers' Terms of Reference

1. To provide a forum for discussion of maintenance issues to the mutual benefit of aircraft owners and maintainers.
2. To extend the forum to the regulators in order to allow issues to be discussed in a constructive manner and resolutions to problems sought.
3. The WG is open to maintainers who are willing and able to contribute on a voluntary basis, but it is expected that these would be holders of EASA Part M approvals.
4. The WG will endeavour to achieve maintenance representation across the range of activity, to include, for example, those involved in avionics and rotary wing.
5. It is not expected that maintainers would necessarily be AOPA members.
6. The WG will normally meet at approximately quarterly intervals, or as required.
7. Items for the agenda will be welcome from owners (via AOPA), maintainers and regulators.
8. Notes of meetings will be circulated to members of the AOPA Executive Committee (the executive arm of the Board).

UK points the way on fire cover

The International Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association is using the UK as an example of how aviation regulations can be modified for the benefit of all in its attempts to persuade the International Civil Aviation Organisation to change its recommendations on fire cover for small aerodromes.

The UK CAA last year moved to allow flight training from unlicensed aerodromes, freeing them from the most onerous and expensive requirements for fire cover. Now a team led by IAOPA's permanent representative at ICAO in Montreal, Frank Hoffman, has filed a paper with ICAO effectively asking the organisation to go down the British route.

This is important for the UK because EASA is under pressure to adopt ICAO recommendations as law throughout Europe, and we could find the old regulation re-imposed by the back door. IAOPA's paper says in part that rescue and firefighting requirements create a significant burden for general aviation pilots and operators, partly because of the landing, parking and handling fees that are levied to pay for it. As AOPA UK pointed out during the campaign here, no evidence could be found of any life having been saved as a result of the requirement.

IAOPA has been involved at ICAO since the 1960s, and it represents some 470,000 pilots in 68 countries worldwide. This international relationship is increasingly important at a time when Europe is trying to convert the

ICAO SARPS – standards and recommended practises – into European regulation. This is not necessarily a good thing; ICAO makes recommendations only to give countries a baseline for regulation, and many countries have 'filed differences' and declined to conform to SARPS. In Britain, for example, at one point the CAA had filed some 600 differences with ICAO, presumably for good reason. Turning the SARPS into law will change the landscape in unpredictable and probably expensive ways. As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, however, all European regulations automatically become national laws. Whatever happens, influencing the SARPS at source – and they are a constantly evolving body of recommendations – is vital work. If you're an AOPA member, a small portion of your dues go to keep Frank Hoffman working in Montreal. Thanks for your contribution.

It may surprise some pilots to hear that UK regulation is often held up as a good

example to follow elsewhere in the world. In Europe we have quarterly Regional Meetings where national AOPAs set out their grievances, and believe me, there are good reasons why there are more GA aircraft based at Biggin Hill than in the whole of Greece. Winston Churchill was spot-on when he said: "If you have ten thousand regulations, you destroy all respect for the law." There are many countries in the world where GA is regulated out of existence, although we are making progress on all fronts.

Looking on the bright side, the Lisbon Treaty also increases the powers of the European Parliament over the Commission. Without getting into a political lecture, few people realise just how powerless the Parliament has been; the EC makes the regulations, the MEPs can debate, lobby and seek to influence them, but they have no real power to change them. That is changing; from April 1st the Parliament will be allowed, for instance, to remove

parts of EASA proposals. Up to now they've only been able to ask to have the baby thrown out with the bathwater. The change will empower the friends of general aviation in Parliament; there are several. Timothy Kirkhope MEP, leader of the Conservative Group, is a PPL with an IMC rating. Transport spokesman Jacqueline Foster MEP is not a pilot but understands a lot about aviation – she used to be an air hostess – and Brian Simpson MEP, Chairman of the Transport Committee, has also responded very helpfully to IAOPA's concerns. ■



The UK has led the way on bringing common sense to fire regulations

Ofcom tinkers with radio tax

The telecoms regulator Ofcom is still looking for ways to make its radio tax-grab look like something else. It has published a consultation document in which it proposes to charge a higher fee according to the reach of ground radio, which it claims will allow it to squeeze frequencies closer together geographically, and therefore be more efficient.

The tax on the lowest-powered stations – those with a Designated Operational Coverage (DOC) of 3,000 feet and 10 miles – will be £650, but the new proposals say that where this DOC and its associated separation zone is equivalent to the size of the UK land mass, the fee should be £9,900 per 25 kHz channel. An area equivalent to half of the UK land mass would attract a fee of £4,950 and an area equivalent to 10% would cost £990.

The new taxes are being introduced in stages and Ofcom says they will reach their top rate in 2016, although nobody expects them to stop rising then. That coincides with the requirement to re-equip with 8.33 radios – something AOPA believes should not be a function of pricing, but a of organisation. Ofcom is charging one third of the price for 8.33 frequencies, but ground stations that go to 8.33 to cut their tax bill will not be able to handle 25kHz traffic. There needs to be co-ordination.

AOPA's Martin Robinson says: "This is a battle we were never going to win. They've found something new they can tax and they're not going to pass up the opportunity. But in several meetings with Ofcom over the past two years AOPA has had success in limiting the damage – the



minimum fee is nowhere near the £2,600 a year that was originally proposed."

As IAOPA has pointed out *ad nauseam*, the shortage of

aeronautical frequencies is entirely artificial and should be overcome by replacing the 27 frequency allocation offices in Europe by two guys in Brussels who could allocate frequencies far more efficiently. NATO has done this with military frequencies and solved its 'shortage' problem overnight. AOPA Germany has generated algorithms to show how it should be done, but the authorities refuse to give them proper consideration. Ofcom is concerned not with efficiencies, but with preserving bureaucratic empires and squeezing us for more tax. ■

GA in green line of fire

CAA chairman Dame Deidre Hutton is warning that general aviation will have to play its part in addressing environmental concerns and can't expect the new emissions trading scheme for airlines, which begins this year, to remove the spotlight from the industry.

Emissions trading is expected to cost airline passengers some €9 billion a year in new taxes, but the disproportionate cost

that when she and CEO Andrew Haines took over at the CAA, there was a feeling that the Authority didn't listen to the industry enough. "You can expect more transparency about what we're doing and why, and for the CAA to be more easily held to account. For our part we will have a better understanding of the risk that we regulate, to better protect the public and be proportionate in our approach. We will also

with regulations, the problems of access to airports. In the near future we have EASA Ops, the Olympics, and the start of emissions trading."

Dame Deidre rehearsed the structural changes put in motion at the CAA, which had remained largely static since 1982 while the industry had evolved radically. Many reforms are in train, and in particular the CAA is putting more effort into guiding events in Europe. "We will concentrate on putting the right people in the right jobs at EASA, at Eurocontrol, in the European Commission – any job a Brit could take.



AOPA Chairman George Done (left), CEO Martin Robinson and CAA Chairman Dame Deidre Hutton at the BBGA conference



of extending it to general aviation means that the small JetA1 and avgas user isn't covered. While she presented no specifics, Dame Deidre made it clear at the BBGA annual conference that GA is not off the hook.

"Aviation has got itself put on the naughty step in the media," she said. "In fact the impact of the sector is quite small, but its proportionate impact will grow as other sectors improve. The CAA can and will contribute to further improvement. The Secretary of State has charged us with making a contribution."

More direct routings are an obvious goal. "A cut in fuel use has to be a win-win," she said. "NATS has set a target of a 10 percent cut in emissions." Afterwards she added: "This is not just an issue for airlines – general aviation will have to play its part."

Whatever the CAA decides, it's likely that its thought processes will be less opaque than in the past. Dame Deidre remarked

become more streamlined – we can't allow costs to continue to increase and expect the industry to pick up the tab. We aim to be more user friendly, and to have more interactive communications. You won't like every decision we make, but we hope you will understand why we've made it."

The CAA's five-year Strategic Plan (covered elsewhere in this issue) has general aviation all through it. "The GA industry is vast and diverse," Dame Deidre said, "and the problems it faces include fuel costs, the decreasing availability of avgas, the move of flight training to more favourable tax regimes, cost of complying

We must influence regulations before they happen, because it's much harder afterwards."

Is having Brits in place a guarantee of influence? Martin Robinson says: "In my experience, Brits in positions of responsibility in Europe tend to 'go native' very quickly. They seem desperate to avoid the accusation that they are 'little Englanders' and are markedly reluctant to press their country's case – in stark contrast to the position of some other countries' officials. By all means let's get more Brits into Europe, but we have to make sure they're the right Brits." ■

Not Sugaring the pill

Pilot and private jet operator Lord Sugar has declined to become a figurehead for general and business aviation, and he did so with his inimitable directness and unassailable good sense – the time is not right, the advantage is not there, you wouldn't be taken seriously. "Everybody's working on recovery," he said. "The last thing people are worrying about is to promote private aviation. It would go down like a lead balloon."

Lord Sugar was speaking at the annual meeting of the BBGA, where a member of the audience pointed out that in the United

States the National Business Aircraft Association uses well-known public figures to promote GA – and what the suffering UK industry needed was a well-known figurehead to carry its banner in public – as high profile person to say that private aviation is a good thing which helps bring create wealth and bring back money into this country. Would he do the job?

No, he said. There would be no sympathy for someone who stood up to plead the case for the private aircraft user when people had their own very immediate problems to deal with. "What

people ask me, particularly in small businesses, is how to survive and how to recover," he said. "The timing is wrong for that." It might be right in the future, he indicated, but right now, you'd be laughed at. It would be a difficult task in these economic times."

Lord Sugar is, however, does about 300 hours a year on business and is a tireless booster of general aviation in all its forms and (at the right time) there would be no better ambassador for the industry. Unlike many who take advantage of general aviation, he is prepared to speak up about its benefits. "I used to have a factory in the wilds of Denmark, a place so remote I can't even remember the name of it," he said. "It would take forever to get there by

public transport. I'd have to go to Stansted, wait for a plane, then to Copenhagen, then get to this place somehow. But when I flew myself there, I could leave the house at 6am and be at the factory at 8:30, do a day's work, leave at 5pm and be back home in no time. It's convenient, and it's absolutely essential for getting to inconvenient places. I know Ryanair flies to inconvenient places, but it calls them Brussels, Frankfurt and so on...

"You get in, you go, you come back. I've done for 25 years or so, and so have some of my staff. It's all about efficient use of executive time. If I have to get there, I want to go from my local airfield. (Stapleford). If I have to drive to Stansted (where he keeps his Embraer Legacy 650 G-SUGA with Titan Airways Executive) that's already an obstacle in my mind. I will use the King Air to go to Paris or whatever – it's all to do with laziness, really. Laziness and unadulterated luxury. My personal gift to myself is my aeroplane. I will not go to major airports any more, and stand there and go through all that security nonsense."

Lord Sugar took part in a question and answer session moderated by George Galanopoulos, managing director of London Executive Aviation. Mr Galanopoulos said the first time he'd gone into Lord Sugar's office he'd seen a bent propeller on the wall. "It was from the first aircraft he bought, which had an engine failure at Stapleford, and he did a very good forced landing," he said. "He has had many aircraft, including a Citation II which he sold after three years at a profit; he had the first Citation Excel, which he sold to me at a profit; then he bought an Embraer Legacy, then the 650."

Lord Sugar also owns a Cirrus SR22 and holds an FAA IR. He had, he said, gone off the end of the runway at Barton in it and dinged the prop. "I made a bad error at Barton by not going round," he said. "I was approaching in a thunderstorm and I got a bit of a tailwind... the runway was wet and I went off the end. Taxied in with a bit of earth on the tip of the prop and unfortunately there were too many people watching. They put a new prop on and I flew it to the maintenance place, where the engine had to come out for all sorts of checks, so it was down for two months for nothing."

Boom time

Lord Sugar said the boom in private aviation a few years was underpinned by "people working on what I call the OPM principle: Other People's Money. They were living off hollow businesses funded by bank borrowing. Private aviation in 2005 was a bit of a dream world – you'd have to have an appointment with Gulfstream to see if you'd be allowed to book a G650, never mind give you a delivery date. Prices were going up... that time will only return

when we get irresponsible spending again."

He clearly understands the aviation business in depth and goes to great lengths to make sure nobody can pull the wool over his eyes. He tends to replace his aircraft every five years when the warranties run out, and he negotiates over the warranties when buying. "I like to understand the ins and outs of every nut and bolt," he said. "I remember buying my first plane from Wichita, and looking at the warranty I concluded that it meant sod-all. It said it covered Cessna parts, and when you dig down to the details 'Cessna parts' means maybe the aluminium on the airframe and everything else wasn't a Cessna part, which led me to ask, what the bloody hell do you people do anyway? Cessna and Embraer, they're a little bit more flexible now in negotiations. But you have to understand what the warranty means because it starts getting very costly if you have to shell out for a new windscreen... then you have contracts with a maintenance fee per hour, and you've got to be a magician to understand what you're paying for. You get to a stage, at five years, where the hourly rate starts to get quite expensive and you think about starting again."

Despite his ear for detail, Lord Sugar still gets caught out. "I was very busy and my Legacy sat on the ground for 30 days doing nothing, and that infringed some maintenance rules and it has to have a check, for some reason, because it didn't move for 30 days."

In fielding questions from the floor Lord Sugar doled out some practical good sense but no magic insights. AOPA's Martin Robinson asked him whether he agreed that over-regulation was a major drag on the industry. "The regulators would say it's all about safety," Lord Sugar said. "There is a lot of regulation, and when you're flying around in singles you keep away from everywhere, and you get more of that happening. I've lost track of who is regulating us here. Is it the CAA or some other authority somewhere?"

"But I'm not one of the owners who get registered in other places to overcome the regulations of the CAA. I don't want it registered in a Caribbean island

somewhere; I like my planes to be G-registered because the CAA is an authority on safety for my aeroplane. You might argue that they go over the top in some things, and maybe there is some room for manoeuvre, but safety comes first."

That said, Lord Sugar has an FAA Instrument Rating, which can only be used in an N-registered aircraft. "I went to America two years ago to get it because the IR here just wasn't possible, the 14 exams or whatever... the US private pilot IR for flight levels up to 18,000 feet is very good. I'm confused about the IMC rating – they're trying to abolish it I'm told. I believe there should be an achievable interim rating like the American one, and I haven't got the time, or maybe the intelligence, for plotting things across the Atlantic and all that. The IR here is like a university degree."

Charles Henry of Cabair asked his view of the VAT anomalies which are driving professional flight training out of Britain, thus costing the government far more. The reply was effectively – that's life. Deal with it. Go offshore. When Peter Lonergan of Biggin Hill asked about

changes to GAR notification times which affected his airfield, Lord Sugar said he would go to Gatwick instead. He has little time for the government and excoriated Foreign Secretary William Hague ("whatsisname") for using private jets while being hostile to their use by business. "The government has a broken record – two broken records, in fact. First, it's the last government's fault. That'll last for another six months maybe. Then they say we're in this is because of the banks. This is the biggest load of rubbish, but the average truck driver and his wife have been brainwashed that the dire situation is due to the banks. If whatsisname Cable was on The Apprentice, at best he'd be driving the taxi."

"I wish I'd come with more positive ideas about how to stimulate the market, but there's not enough customers because they're sorting their businesses out so they can make some money. The good news is that days of irresponsible spending will return! There will be another cycle, people will forget all this and they will start spending again." ■



AOPA ensures SESAR does not neglect GA

IAOPA-Europe's main delegates involved in the Single European Sky programme met in Brussels at the end of February to plan strategy and set out policy on SESAR. IAOPA is involved in 84 SESAR work streams



covering a vast array of subjects, and co-ordination is paramount. Dr Michael Erb and Klaus-Peter Sternemann of AOPA Germany and Ben Stanley of AOPA UK are most closely involved with SESAR, which is planning Europe's air traffic

management system for the future. The scope of SESAR is vast and involves everything from future airspace categories and control systems to data provision and aircraft equipment. Consultation and planning involves regulators, airlines, aircraft manufacturers, equipment providers, European air forces, ATC providers and trades unions, airfield operators and many

more groups, and as is often the case, the big beasts have the loudest voices; if general aviation is not represented at every level, there is a risk that 20 years from now its place in the skies will be in question.

The meeting followed a European Commission conference the previous week on funding and financing for SESAR. The European Parliament has laid down that those who are forced to pay while reaping no benefit should be recompensed, and GA falls into that category. While it has not been decided what on-board systems will be required, they will certainly cost money, and there will be aircraft which cannot comply with equipage requirements. None of this means much to the airlines or aircraft manufacturers, but thanks to IAOPA's lobbying the EC recognises that GA is a special case. IAOPA Senior Vice President Martin Robinson attended the conference.

"Views on funding are very diverse," he says. "The attitude of the airlines is that funding is not a problem, and that if there's a good business case, loans will be available. That of course is not GA's position. The military have their own budget constraints, and the air traffickers have a position, and the European Investment Bank is closely involved. But for the GA pilot and owner, the demand to equip with 8.33 radios, perhaps ADS-B and whatever other systems will ensure interoperability with CAT constitutes a significant cost with no financial return, and the EC recognises this. How they will handle it is unclear. The regulations allow for some of the income from airline emissions trading, which starts this year, to be used for 'network improvements', so that is one avenue to pursue.

"One positive outcome of the meeting was that I discovered that one of the European Investment Bank delegates is a GA pilot and a member of AOPA Germany, and he could be a useful source of advice." ■

Aerodromes again

Another brief update from David Ogilvy

Over many years, AOPA has amassed files full of papers relating to work carried out to save the futures of GA aerodromes and airstrips. The biggest pile concerned Lee-On-Solent, for which the associated documents covered the early critical stages during and after release from the Ministry of Defence as HMS Daedalus. These reminded us that the site was very nearly lost to aviation and it is encouraging to see that this and work subsequently carried out by other organisations is producing positive results.

Other early papers relate to long-established bases that went through periods of doubt, including (no doubt surprisingly to some readers), Barton, Bournemouth, Cranfield, Leicester, Plymouth,

Southampton and White Waltham, and many smaller sites, some of which have been lost to all. Much more recently, sites for concern include Bembridge, Sandown, Caernarfon, and Enstone, while at the present time AOPA has no fewer than twelve places with problems relating to wind turbines. In one such case the local authority asked AOPA to decide whether planning permission should be granted or refused! In at least two other situations, following firm inputs from the Association and others concerned, applications for wind turbines very close to flying sites have been turned down.

AOPA has limited capacity for storing old files and, to relieve congestion, all the early papers have been put through the shredder. Before this happened, though, a brief look through some of the records revealed some interesting historical facts and the extent to which AOPA has been involved. The threats hanging around us today, though, are no less serious. Evidence of this came to light in late February when, in one day alone, we were asked to handle planning or operational problems relating to seven flying sites – a record.

Swedish maintenance

IAOPA Europe has written to EASA asking the Agency to inform national aviation authorities (NAAs) that manufacturers' recommendations and service bulletins are not mandatory and aircraft owners should not be forced to comply with them. The request, set out in an IAOPA White Paper on maintenance, follows an increasing number of sometimes bizarre decisions by national authorities who have misinterpreted the Part M maintenance requirements. As an example, Sweden has made it mandatory to have the door seals on some aircraft lubricated by a licensed engineer every 30 days, battery water to be checked on a similar schedule – whether a gel-type battery or not – and oil to be changed every four months regardless of flight hours. When challenged, the Swedish CAA blames EASA and point to AMC M.A. 302 (d) 1. of the Part M requirements: "An owner or operator's maintenance programme should normally be based

upon the maintenance review board (MRB) report where applicable, the maintenance planning document (MPD), the relevant chapters of the maintenance manual or any other maintenance data containing information on scheduling. Furthermore, an owner or operators maintenance programme should also take into account any maintenance data containing information on scheduling for components." This means, according to some NAA's, that manufacturer's recommendations must always be complied with. IAOPA points out that other sections of Part M specifically refer to documents such as Service Bulletins as 'non-mandatory material', and it is requesting speedy clarification from EASA. The current situation has led to major problems in Sweden, where aircraft have had to be flown for some hours to a licensed engineer who can lubricate the door seals each month – a two-minute job accompanied by 45 minutes of expensive paperwork.

IAOPA points out that the effect of

mandating compliance with service letters or bulletins – which are not officially approved as instructions for continuing airworthiness – is to give privately-employed non-EU citizens working for the various Type Certificate holders legislative powers that cover the European Union. This situation is completely unacceptable.

IAOPA's White Paper also requests that EASA clarify the situation concerning 'grandfathered' documents on continuing airworthiness that pre-date the adoption of the JARs in 2003. Some NAAs have been citing Part M when demanding full and complete documentation going back 20 or even 30 years, with aircraft grounded until all the paperwork can be produced – which in some cases is not possible. IAOPA's position is that maintenance documents overseen by NAAs prior to the adoption of the JARs were effectively accepted by the system in September 2003, and that no owner should now be required to provide documentary proof that maintenance schedules were adhered to in the 1990s, 80s or even 1970s. ■

Mentoring Scheme latest

Mick Elborn and Timothy Nathan of the AOPA Members Working Group have begun a promotion of the AOPA Mentoring Scheme, which is designed to help pilots get to the next level in their flying. Have a look at what they've written... could you take advantage of it?

"Want to add something to your flying?

A new purpose? New horizons?

You are not alone. Too many GA pilots give up for lack of challenge.

For the last decade there has been a steady downward trend in the number of new pilot licences issued. Fewer than 50% of JAR FCL licences are renewed at the first renewal date after issue.

We at AOPA want to help you stay in flying, increase your confidence, knowledge and enjoyment.

So whether you want to fly further, go abroad, or go to more interesting and challenging destinations, we have experienced pilots out there who are willing to give their time and share their flying knowledge with you. You can also easily get in touch with them through the AOPA Mentoring Scheme.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), an association for pilots as much as for owners, has developed a VFR Mentoring Scheme. We have a number of experienced pilots who are willing to be a mentor to you and help you extend and enjoy your flying

experience, and keep you flying.

There are some formalities, but it is very easy for you to sign up to be a mentee and have access to the mentors ready and waiting to help you.

A mentor will work with you in a non-instructional environment to help, and be with you, as you plan and take a flight. You will choose what you want to get out of the flight, you will plan it and you will fly it as PIC, with your mentor alongside you on the ground and in the air to give advice and guidance.

There is no charge for the service.

AOPA mentors do it out of a love of flying and for the joy of helping people grow their capabilities and confidence.

You can read all about the mentoring scheme and see how to join through our website at www.aopa.co.uk.

If you are an FI or CFI reading this and the website details, and can see the merits of such a scheme in your flying school or club, then AOPA can help you set it up to be run within your organisation. You will see that it is not an alternative to instruction. Rather, it is aimed at keeping pilots flying, building experience and improving safety outside the instructional environment, buying more hours in your aircraft and more instructor time for revalidations and, perhaps, more ratings. One thing we promise: if a mentor thinks that a mentee needs instruction then he or she will be recommended to come straight back to you.

www.aopa.co.uk and click on Mentoring Scheme." ■

Costs survey shows up Denmark

AOPA Sweden has made a comparative study of fees and charges across the world and has concluded that the Danes are the most put-upon GA pilots anywhere.

Repeatedly, Denmark tops the list of the most rapacious cash-collectors. In terms of licensing fees, it costs more than €320 a year, averaged over five years, to keep a PPL in Denmark, compared to less than €20 in the UK. PPL theory test fees are €1000 in Denmark, just half that in the UK (and virtually nothing in the USA and France). The charge for an IR test is €1,400 in Denmark, less than €500 in the UK, €250 in France and around €100 in the USA.

In theory it should be possible to go 'regulatory shopping' for the best prices in Europe after EASA takes control – this was one of the arguments put forward in EASA's favour. But some states are moving to protect their revenues by allowing only aircraft with national registrations to be based on their territory, something IAOPA strongly opposes.

You're a pilot? Cool!

A major study of flight training in the USA, concentrating in particular on why students drop out during training, has suggested that we do not make enough of the exclusivity and the sense of achievement people get from becoming pilots.

The "cool factor" is identified as an under-exploited asset for flight training organisations, which could make more of the fact that learning to fly sets you apart from the common run of folk. While some pilots make too much of this – I knew a chap once who wore a fleece-lined leather jacket to work, even in summer – it is not something that flying schools tap into. Perhaps because instructors and managers get blasé, or even jaded, we do not foster the student's sense of wonder, excitement, anticipation and achievement.

The situation was set out by Mark Benson, chief executive of the attitude survey company APCO Insight, who has recently obtained his PPL. He says that the whole sense of community and belonging that pilots feel among pilots could be an important promotional tool for the industry



Above: GA doesn't exploit the 'cool' factor

to retain student pilots. And he adds: "The sheer enjoyment of flying is an important attribute that should be emphasised in training."

AOPA's Jennifer Storm, who was in charge of the survey – called the AOPA Flight Training Student Retention Initiative, adds: "The research says that there's a huge element of the specialness of being a pilot that we're not especially tapping into. Focus groups suggested that exclusivity and inclusion in an achievement-oriented aviation community are powerful themes."

Unsurprisingly, cost is the major turn-off for students. Schools could improve the

picture by showing how they are trying to save the student money, rather than running up unnecessary bills. But the second factor after money is the relationship with the instructor. Students hate instructors who appear to be going through the motions, who don't take a personal interest in their progress, and who seem indifferent to their successes. Benson says: "Instructors who are simply building time to apply for pilot jobs are a major turn-off for students. You would be amazed at how many people believe that the instructor didn't care whether they passed or failed."

From the flight school's point of view, having committed instructors who are properly paid and have all the training materials they need pays dividends. A bored instructor will lose students. Although the survey found that most student pilots – even those who quit – considered their training to have been a positive experience, many commented on the lack of professionalism, organisation and motivation of their instructors. Benson concludes: "Poor or unclear instruction was almost as big a negative factor as cost. It's all about the instructor— it's a decisive relationship." ■