

An end to equality at airfields?

The CAA is moving to cut out what protection general aviation still has against being thrown out of regional airfields by changing the wording of the rule that requires equal treatment for all users.

At the moment, one of the conditions of licensing for a public-use airfield is that it "shall be available to all persons on equal terms and conditions." At a recent meeting of the General Aviation Strategic Forum, a representative of the CAA's economic regulation group said that the wording was to be changed because it was "no longer appropriate in the modern world."

Few people at the Strategic Forum had any idea what this would mean, but in fact it poses an enormous threat to the continued use of a number of well-equipped aerodromes by general aviation. Depending on what wording the CAA is planning to substitute, it could entitle licensed airfields to turn aircraft away at their discretion.

Airfields can operate under either private or public use licenses, with a public use licence requiring equal treatment for all. The law was tested at Coventry Airport during turmoil over the export of live animals. In a legal challenge, protesters said the requirement for equal treatment allowed them access to public areas of the airfield. The Law Lords upheld the challenge, with the judges ruling that any other

interpretation "would destroy the plainly intended effect" of the rules.

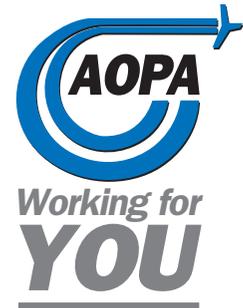
The CAA subsequently challenged the Law Lords ruling but got nowhere. Now, it seems, they intend to undermine the 'equal rights' rules by changing the wording to destroy its plainly intended effect.

The result could be catastrophic for flight training and all unsubsidised aviation. Some airfields are already using every charging device open to them to drive GA away. One Swiss AOPA member who questioned a landing charge of over £100 at a Welsh airport found he had been charged £8 departure tax for each of his passengers, on top of compulsory handling fees for services he neither used nor required.

Compulsory handling has become a weapon in the hands of the unscrupulous. Introduced by European law, its authors have told AOPA it was never intended to cover general aviation, but of course, the effects of legislation are rarely those which were intended. Not only did Europe require compulsory handling – in order, they said, to ensure that charter passengers weren't left wandering around aprons unsupervised – but they required that more than one handling agent be available in order to introduce competition and theoretically keep prices down. Because of the economic realities of life, some handling agents have effectively

parcelled out the work on a time basis, so there's no competition for the end user and pilots have been saddled with blood-curdling bills, especially when agents resort to 'out of hours' surcharges. Charges are one reason that instrument flying is atrophying, with the obvious effect on safety; one AOPA member who recently renewed his IMC rating reported he had to pay for each ILS he shot at a regional airfield, then was required to land to pay the fee, then was forced to pay handling charges because he had landed.

Increasingly, regional airfields want to make their money like Heathrow and Gatwick do – from shops and car parking, not from aviation. An unscientific survey of a West Country airfield where commercial traffic is a relatively recent phenomenon noted more than 700 cars in the car parks, at £8.50 each a day. The question arises – how interested are they in your landing fee? They don't need any more help from the CAA to shut you out. The Authority is required to consult on the proposed change; AOPA will not allow what protection remains for GA to be eroded. ■



Lee-on-Solent battle reaches Parliament

The extraordinary situation at Lee on Solent, where Hampshire Police have decreed that it is unsafe for anyone but themselves and the Coastguard to use the airfield, has been debated in Parliament as the government sought to justify spending £8 million in public money for the benefit of two helicopters and an Islander.

Hampshire Police, who operate Lee on Solent, have decided to kick everybody out except Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club, which has a lease until December 2008. Those who are being booted out include flight training organisations previously forced out of Southampton, and the loss of Lee on Solent leaves the grass strip at Goodwood as the only GA airfield between Brighton and Bournemouth.

The ban shows up the government's claims to support GA to be an empty sham. Former aviation minister Gillian Merron's stated aim of preserving airfields for GA – a theme which has been picked up by her replacement, Jim Fitzpatrick – is seen to be nothing more than empty prattle when the government's own airfield is closed to GA on the whim of Hampshire Police.

At an adjournment debate won by Peter Viggers, Tory MP for Gosport, on November 15th the aviation minister refused to rescind the ban on GA pending a full review of the decision. Mr Fitzpatrick said the closure was a matter for Hampshire Police – but the police, who operate one Islander, simply manage the airfield on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, an arm of Mr Fitzpatrick's department. Mr Fitzpatrick inferred that a risk

assessment on flying operations at Lee had been undertaken. However, repeated requests to the Chief Constable of Hampshire for copies of this assessment by various parties have not been replied to.

Mr Peter Viggers MP quoted extensively from material supplied by AOPA during the debate, and he was ably supported by Gerald Howarth, MP for Aldershot and a member of the Parliamentary Aviation Group. As the minister was forced to acknowledge, the fight for GA at Lee will continue, with the active support of AOPA.

But the questions left hanging are baffling. What business does Hampshire Police have running an airfield, especially if they consider themselves incompetent to run it safely when

more than three aircraft use it? Surely the answer is for them to give it up and let somebody capable of handling four or even more aircraft do the job. Why do they need to manage an airfield in order to operate one Islander? How can the DfT, which is responsible for the regulation of civil aviation in the UK, allow a situation to develop where the manager of its own airfield feels he has to close it because he cannot safely operate it with the resources placed at his disposal?

We would all love a personal £8 million, 256-acre airfield that we could keep to ourselves, but is it a proper use of public funds and public land, especially when Lee on Solent is such a vital link in the diminishing chain of GA airfields?

For the full story on how Lee on Solent has been brought to this bizarre situation, see John Walker's report on page 16.

STOP PRESS: As a result of a letter sent by the barrister representing the Lee Flying Association as a prelude to legal action being taken, Hampshire Police agreed to suspend the ban on GA due to begin at midnight on November 16 to December 14. ■

Below: the grass strip at Goodwood, the only GA airfield between Brighton and Bournemouth if Lee on Solent is closed



Dave Anderson

IMC under threat

The Department for Transport has tacitly agreed to support AOPA's campaign to retain the IMC rating, which is under threat from Europe – see George Done's Chairman's Column on page 4.

UK government representatives are at a loss to understand EASA's stance on the subject of the IMC, which is meeting solid resistance in Europe. Along with AOPA, they will be seeking clarification on European attitudes in upcoming meetings in Brussels and Cologne.



When the UK licence is abolished, as it will be under EASA, there will be no provision for the UK-only Instrument Meteorological Conditions rating to be carried over onto an EASA licence unless Europe accepts it. Resistance is particularly strong in countries like Germany.

The IMC Rating is a demonstrable success. Conceived by AOPA because of the onerous requirements which put an Instrument

Rating beyond the reach of most pilots (22 IRs were issued in the UK in the whole of last year) the syllabus was written by the late Ron Campbell and driven through against strong domestic opposition, with many voices saying it would merely encourage the under-qualified to chance their hand at instrument flying, leading to an increase in fatal accidents.

As AOPA expected, the opposite had turned out to be the case. More than 18,000 IMC ratings have been issued in the last 27 years, and there have been no fatal accidents resulting from pilots legally using the privileges of the rating in a serviceable aeroplane in UK airspace.

Despite the demonstrable record of long-term safety, the same objections are being raised now in Europe, both by governments and by organisations like the European Cockpit Association – particularly as there is a UK-inspired move to upgrade the IMC rating into a *de facto* Instrument Rating, allowing privileges beyond those currently conferred. There is a risk that rather than improving the situation, we could end up with nothing.

When Patrick Goudou took over at EASA he

announced in this magazine that he intended to make sure there were no advantages to gaining an FAA IR by making the European equivalent accessible to all. There is still a long way to go on several fronts before we can begin to see that he is succeeding.

The situation is in stark contrast to EASA's attitude to the French 'Brevet de Base', which will be adopted as a 'Restricted Light Aircraft Pilots Licence' despite its appalling record of fatal accidents. The Brevet allows pilots to fly up to 50 nm from their aerodrome of origin. With as little as 20 hours instruction they may carry passengers and land away if they have the permission of their instructor.

Unfortunately, the Brevet is a significant reason why French accident rates are higher than most of Europe – generally France has between 80 and 90 fatal GA accidents a year.

Martin Robinson says: "It beggars belief that EASA, which is supposedly concerned primarily with safety, should accede to French demands to include the Brevet, with its appalling accident record, while standing out against the IMC rating, which has been proven over decades to be a lifesaver." ■

Chief executive's diary:

The dangers of safety

It's been a good month for safety discussions. Europe's at it, the CAA's at it, and of course AOPA's primary aim is to promote safety. This Association has a zero-accident rate policy, which I'm sorry to say is not shared by EASA; but when I ask them how many deaths they'd be happy with, they don't have an answer.

The trouble with safety is that it means different things to different people. I'm convinced that the word 'safety' is sometimes invoked by regulators (and airfield operators – see our story on Lee-on-Solent) as a smoke screen to end debate on important issues. In aviation, safety – rather than patriotism – is the last refuge of the scoundrel.

Of course, that's not always the case. On October 2, I was at an ACEP meeting – that's the Airspace Communication and Education Plan, an industry-CAA body that's been formed to develop education material, primarily to reduce the number of infringements of controlled airspace and to tell the world about changes associated with ATSOAS. See www.airspacesafety.com. ACEP is well-run by the CAA's Dave Chapman and stands a good chance of doing worthwhile work.

Once again I must apologise in advance for the avalanche of acronyms that follows. In aviation regulation we can talk in a language nobody understands, even ourselves.

On October 3 there was a meeting of the ASSG, the Airspace Strategy Steering Group chaired by Phil Roberts, who rejoices in the title of ADAP(1) at the CAA. ASSG is continuing efforts to resolve how SES, the Single European Sky, is to be rolled out in UK. Also serves as a focal point for industry

comments in respect of SES. Our main concern is the lack of impact assessments associated with uncontrolled airspace when changes are made to the existing shape/size of CAS.

Between October 3 and 5 I was in Barcelona as guest speaker for IAOPA Europe at the 'FIRA' – a sort of aerofair – at Sabadell, a GA airport that's had more than its share of tribulations in recent years. There's a real thirst for information there on what's happening in the rest of Europe. I spoke about SES, EASA and the need to support the work of IAOPA Europe through joining the AOPA Spain.

On October 10 I was guest speaker at the Flying Farmers AGM in Sywell. This was a well-attended event, and very nice to meet the farmers, a commendably large number of whom are AOPA members.

On the following day I was at the second of the bi-annual NATMAC (National Air Traffic Management Advisory Committee) meeting discussing airspace charges, 8.33 kHz, Mode-S and Infringements. I am not at all happy about Mode-S transition, which the regulators seem happy to leave mired in confusion. Failure to clarify the position has resulted in manufacturers putting out adverts for Mode-S which do not qualify who needs to install it, and by when, and this is very misleading. Added to this problem is the debacle over the 'LPST' or lightweight low-power Mode-S transponder. When Mode-S was originally discussed, it was promised that it would not be made mandatory until a LPST was available. That promise has been reneged upon. Further, we still do not know what the rest of Europe



is doing, as it is up to member states to determine which portions of their airspace require Mode-S. ICAO requires all aircraft to be fitted with an altitude reporting transponder, and as far as I can tell, you also need one if you cross an international FIR.

I am personally supporting the campaign aimed at getting pilots to use the 'Alt' mode on aircraft transponders. If you've got it, use it – it's bad airmanship not to.

On October 15th I had a meeting at the AOPA offices with Geoff Bailey from Eurocontrol about 8.33 kHz and the future communication requirements. Under pressure from IAOPA, Eurocontrol via the European Commission's Industry Consultation Body agreed to commission an independent report on the need for a downward vertical expansion of 8.33 kHz radios, which are currently required only above FL195. As we go to press, AOPA Germany is reporting that Eurocontrol may have reneged on its commitment to produce an independent review.

On October 17 I was in Cologne for the inaugural meeting of ECAST, which is reported on separately in these pages. I have to say that I felt this was one of the worst meetings that I have attended at EASA. There is no common view of GA safety across Europe, and EASA wants to have an agency/industry quango where EASA provides the venue and food and drink in return for industry sending representatives funded from membership subscriptions. EASA in effect has a level of fatal GA accidents each year which it considers acceptable. AOPA's goal is to focus everyone's mind on a zero rate, and success each year will be measured by how close we get to that, while recognising that we will come up against a position of diminishing returns.

Also during October, AOPA submitted its replies to HMRC on Fuel Duty/End of Derogation; and to eBorders. And on the

Go-around fee 'hits safety'

Shoreham Airport has introduced a fee for a go-around, charging half a landing fee to anyone unfortunate enough to have to chuck a landing away. AOPA believes the new charge is deeply regrettable and will have a detrimental effect on safety, and is asking the CAA to intervene. Already, Shoreham operators say there is evidence that pilots are leaving go-arounds until very late and reducing safety margins.

The charge was introduced for a three-month trial period in July, but its permanence has now been confirmed. Go-arounds instigated by ATC are exempt, and the airport says go-arounds for safety reasons, as judged by ATC, will not be charged for. But apart from the requirement to train students by going around, what other reasons are there? Airport users have protested the new charge, but to no avail.

Martin Robinson says: "This is totally irresponsible and wholly wrong. There is only

last day of October I had lunch with Charles Henry and Steve Read of Cabair, both of whom are stalwart supporters of AOPA. (Offers of lunch are always welcome.)

What, no radio?

On the first day of November I attended the 'Shairspace' conference in Durham, which was organised by MOD/RAF and UK Airprox Board and was attended by a lot of RAF ATCOs most of whom seemed unaware of ATSOAS. During the coffee break one controller from RAF Leeming was shocked to learn that some GA operations are still non-radio. He asked me: "So how do I talk to you?" Duh!

I also met up with operators of Eshott airfield in Northumberland, another staunch AOPA supporter, and heard their views about the local GA issues. It was fairly obvious to me that GA and the military have common views, particularly when it comes to airlines operating in Class G airspace. However, the point was made that as the airspace becomes busier we have to find better ways of sharing the airspace safely.

On November 5 there was a GPS meeting at the Royal Institute of Navigation. AOPA member and President of the RIN Professor David Last floated the idea of RIN and AOPA working more closely on the issue of GPS, which is an excellent plan. As a subgroup of ACEP, I chair a GPS working group to which experts from RIN have now been invited, joining John Board of PFA and Roger Dunn of PPL/IR.

And I finish this diary as I started, with a meeting of ACEP at Gatwick on November 6. David Chapman is keen to support safety initiatives and was supportive of the AOPA Wings Scheme during the meeting. SRGs motto is Safety Is No Accident'. EASA's might be 'Safety Is.....?' Answers on a postcard.

Martin Robinson

one person who is responsible for the safety of the flight, and that's the pilot. If he or she decides to go round for whatever reason, whether there was an aircraft on the runway, whether the approach was not properly stabilised, whether the angle of approach was wrong or whatever, there is no place for a FISO to second-guess them on safety in order to take their money. A go-around

AOPA is concerned that such a blatantly unsafe charge should be nipped in the bud

should be a first resort, not a last resort, when safety is in question. Is Shoreham so desperate for money that they are willing to take risks with pilots' lives?"

Shoreham is not alone in starting to levy

this charge, and AOPA is concerned that such a blatantly unsafe charge should be nipped in the bud. AOPA has arranged to discuss the issue with the Civil Aviation Authority, who were asked by *General Aviation* to comment but

who had made no comment at the time of going to press. ■

New BBGA CEO

Guy Lachlan is the new chief executive of the British Business and General Aviation Association, succeeding Mark Wilson, who has gone off to be Netjets' director of regulatory affairs in Europe.

Lachlan joins BBGA from Honeywell Aerospace, for whom he held senior positions in avionics sales in America and Europe. Prior to 1996 he worked for Marshalls at Cambridge.

The BBGA – formerly GAMTA – and AOPA have many common interests, with Mark Wilson and AOPA CEO Martin Robinson often having worked in tandem, establishing common positions on issues and covering for each other in meetings with regulators.



Another mugging from the CAA

Your comments on the CAA's new charging regime are to be in before December 14th, although whether they'd be worth the paper they're written on is moot. This is the third round of increases resulting from the CAA's wretched Joint Review Team, which decided to hike virtually every charge the CAA makes on general aviation and rebate the money to the airlines, mostly British Airways.

While CAA chairman Sir Roy McNulty has said repeatedly that he was not 'sat on' by BA in this matter, the airline must be extremely pleased that he did exactly what they wanted without being sat on. This year BA has come back to the CAA with a demand for another £300,000 from GA, perhaps to help it pay its £300 million fine for price-fixing. There is evidence that Sir Roy, having had his fingers roasted last time out, is less

willing to accommodate them.

Consultation is required by law before new charges are introduced, and who knows, somebody at the CAA may even read your contribution, but the chance of them rowing back on fee increases is on a par with Newcastle's chances of winning something this year. The proposed increases are set out at www.caa.co.uk/default.aspx?catid=1513.

If you are sending to the CAA your view that a specific new charge or increase is unfair, please copy your message to info@aopa.co.uk for the attention of Martin Robinson.

The new scale of aerodrome charges are among those which will have the greatest impact on AOPA members. Examination fees and test fees are in for a battering, and others will rise in line with inflation. – Pat Malone ■



Above: Sir Roy McNulty was not 'sat on' by BA

Accident anomalies

AOPA has brought together the authors of two analytical reports on aircraft accidents which have uncovered similar patterns independently of each other.

Neither the American FAA nor the New Zealand CAA were aware that the other was carrying out research into the causes of particular GA accidents, and that the conclusions of one important section of their work were broadly similar. AOPA UK has now put the authors of each report in contact with the other.

An analysis of the data in both reports shows that about 75 percent of all fatal accidents are down to errors of judgement by the pilot. On the other hand, 75 percent of non-fatal accidents are the result of handling errors.

Martin Robinson says: "This allows us to question how we are reacting to these accidents, and whether we are addressing the correct issues when we try to reduce accident rates. Anything that helps us refine our approach to accidents is welcome."

Blackpool joins Strasser Scheme

Blackpool Airport has joined AOPA's Strasser Scheme, under which fees are waived for aircraft making genuine precautionary or emergency landings. The new recruit brings to 194 the number of British airfields subscribing to the life-saving scheme, which has the backing of the CAA.

At the same time as applying to join the scheme, Blackpool's managers have reaffirmed the airport's commitment to general aviation, even though it has been the fastest-growing regional airport for commercial traffic over the past four



years. The airport bills itself as 'The North West's New International Airport' but Blackpool's communications manager Susan Kendrick says: "The general aviation community is very welcome and highly valued at Blackpool International."

Blackpool's sister airfield, Halfpenny Green, is already a member of the Strasser Scheme, which is administered by AOPA's Channel Islands chairman Charles Strasser.

Blackpool's decision to join the scheme follows a report in October's *General Aviation* about a pilot who was billed for £35 plus VAT after suffering a loss of power on take-off and

Left: a Cessna is followed by two fire engines after making a precautionary landing at Blackpool. Landing fees were waived under AOPA's Strasser Scheme



circling to land. He departed after changing the plugs on his ARV.

The charge has now been rescinded. Explaining the event, Susan Kendrick says: "BLK Air Traffic Control enter landing times onto a computer system and from this information an invoice is automatically raised. Of course, once we were informed by ATC that this had been an emergency incident, we credited the landing fee accordingly."

The purpose of the Strasser Scheme is to ensure that pilots who are making decisions on emergency or precautionary landings, often in difficult circumstances, need have no fears about the cost. The 194 participating airfields – Heathrow, Gatwick and London City have not been asked to accommodate the scheme –

have each received an AOPA 'Flight Safety Award' certificate for their contribution to aviation safety. All military airfields in the UK have signed up. Publishers of airfield data have been asked to highlight this safety concession, and so far Aerad, AFE and Pooleys have agreed to do so. Regrettably, Jeppesens have not.

In CAP 667 9.2(c) the CAA says: "There were a number of fatal accidents where a timely diversion or precautionary landing could have avoided an accident. In the UK there is a culture of pressing on and hoping for the best rather than accepting the inconvenience and cost of a diversion. This culture needs to be changed, firstly by educating pilots and secondly by persuading aerodrome owners that there should be no charge for emergency landings or diversions. It is recommended that all aerodrome owners be persuaded to adopt a policy that there should be no charges for emergency landings or diversions by general aviation aircraft."

The CAA, however, did nothing to promote the idea, so Charles Strasser took on the job on behalf of AOPA. In cases where airports have declined to waive landing fees, Charles Strasser has often been able to mediate successfully. However, he declines to take on claims if after investigation he is not satisfied that they are genuine. The scheme operates to stringent rules, and any suggestion that it was being abused would have a serious detrimental effect on safety.

Unfortunately, 16 airfields refuse to implement the safety recommendation of CAP 667, but it is hoped that as the life-saving potential of the scheme is brought home to them, they will have a change of heart. They are Belfast International, Biggin Hill, Birmingham, Cardiff, Carlisle, Dundee, Exeter, Filton, Gloucestershire, Humberside, Isle of Man, Leeds/Bradford, Luton, Manchester, Norwich, and Teesside ■

EASA sets up new safety group

New acronym of the month is EGAST, the European General Aviation Safety Team, set up by EASA as part of its ESSI (which, as I'm sure you know, stands for European Strategic Safety Initiative). EGAST is one of three groups – the others are ECAST, for commercial air transport, and EHAAT, for helicopters.

This is an unwieldy outfit, with more than 170 organisations invited to participate as well as national aviation authorities, manufacturers, air traffic controllers and accident investigators.

The ranks are expected to thin out markedly because representatives will be required to commit time and resources over the next ten years to specific work streams which they will have to fund themselves, and when money is called for, the room tends to empty. With ECAST and EHAAT, core teams of about 20 have been established.

The first meeting was held in Cologne on October 17th and was chaired by John Vincent, the ex-CAA man who is now EASA's head of safety analysis and research. EASA's

executive director Patrick Goudou and head of certification Norbert Lohl provided the introductions and set out the aims – to gather and share data to identify potential safety hazards, and establish how to deal with them. The purpose, they said, was to protect the aviation community, passengers and general public from harm caused by aviation related accidents and incidents.

John Vincent said EGAST was intended to be a partnership with industry, and not 'owned' by EASA. The separation of EGAST and ECAST indicates a willingness to look at general aviation separately and not devise rules for airliners to which GA must counter-productively conform. EHAAT, he said, has

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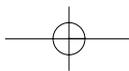
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See page 31 for details.



Runway robbery – part II

Negotiations are continuing with Liverpool Airport over the case of a pilot who was charged £191.68 following a precautionary landing there.

After intervention by Charles Strasser, airport director Andy Gower has agreed to waive the landing fee – a rebate of half the fee had originally been offered – but the landing fee constitutes only £26 of the bill. The remainder is ‘compulsory handling’ charges demanded by Liverpool Aviation Services, which the airport says is nothing to do with them.

The case highlights the curse of compulsory handling for general aviation and its detrimental effect on safety. Liverpool is a signatory to the Strasser Scheme, under which airport fees are waived in case of genuine emergency or precautionary diversion. But at Liverpool and elsewhere, handling agents remain free to charge what they please.

The issue arose when a PA-28 en route from Dunkeswell to its home base at Woodvale diverted to Liverpool because of deteriorating weather, landing at 2000 hours. Later the pilot received an invoice from the handling company, Liverpool Aviation Services, comprising a £26 landing fee, a £24.68 ‘handling fee’ and a £141 ‘out of hours charge’.

AOPA’s Channel Islands chairman Charles Strasser, who set up the scheme, says the Liverpool case is the starkest example yet of outrageous overcharging which could ultimately kill a pilot who was deterred from landing by it. In an exchange of correspondence with Andy Gower, he wrote: “LAS personnel were already on site, the pilot was not offered and did not use any of their

facilities, he used his own phone to arrange transport home, and he was not made aware through the person on duty that there would be an out of hours charge. I therefore think that a charge of £141 in addition to the handling charge of £24.68 for a non-existent service is extortionate to put it mildly. Surely, as this reflects on the reputation of your airport you must have some control over it.”

Andy Gower, while reaffirming Liverpool’s commitment to the Strasser Scheme, says he has no discretion in the matter of handling charges. He has passed Charles Strasser’s contact details to Wayne Barrett, Operations Director of Liverpool Aviation Services, to discuss the issue. Further developments will be reported here.

As several AOPA members have learned, Charles Strasser will not take up a case if there are ambiguities, or if the rules have not been strictly followed. While some will feel cheated, it is vital that there should be no suspicion that the system can be abused to avoid the payment of landing fees. However, that is not to say that a pilot who has made a mistake or a misjudgement is excluded from the scheme; a fatal accident is an accident whether the pilot is infallible or not.

Charles Strasser says: “As a pilot of 52 years experience I know it is always easier to pass judgement when sitting comfortably on the ground than when faced with making rational, correct and safe decisions in the air. I much prefer a diversionary landing to an accident statistic for whatever reason a genuine precautionary landing is made.



Above: handling agents remain free to charge what they please

“My main concern, besides trying to get a refund of the unjustified out of hours charge, is the detrimental effect that the charge of £191.68 will have on the decision-making process of GA pilots when faced with a situation when he should be making an emergency or precautionary landing and wrongly takes such a potential cost into account and ploughs on to become a possible fatal accident statistic.

“I think handling agents have just as much a duty to help prevent accidents as airport authorities, and the latter in my view also have duty to ensure their contractual arrangements with handling agents should make provision for this. It should be part of any handling agent’s contractual agreement with the airport authority to provide the same non-revenue earning service in the case of genuine emergency or precautionary diversion landings as recommended in the CAA CAP 667 9.2(c). Even better would be an arrangement such as successfully operates in Jersey, where there is an additional airside/landside entry/exit point away from the security area of the main terminal and administered by the local flying club or school rather than by a ‘compulsory handling’ agent.”

committed itself to reducing the helicopter accident rate by 80% by 2016.

EGAST, John Vincent added, was seen as a forum for sharing best practice, improving sources of information, and safety promotion. The rest of the day was spent in convoluted discussion on various ways of achieving the above. France said it was difficult to collect data from commercial aviation, so GA will be even worse. It was suggested that number of deaths, number of pilots and number of active aircraft were factual and relatively easy to get. In the Netherlands micro-lighting is perceived as being one of the least safe activities. It was proposed that the work be confined to fatal accidents so that the data is of manageable

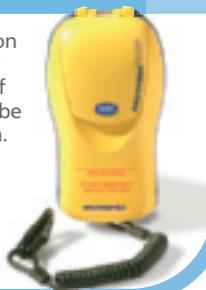
size. An initial core team of 15 was established, based on volunteers who were in the room with little regard for suitability, background or experience. There was considerable discussion on exactly who represented what, and even manufacturers and national aviation authorities were brought into the team, the NAAs being Poland and the Czech Republic.

I have not come away with much enthusiasm for what has been set up so far. I suspect the primary reason for this project is so that EASA can show safety improvements in the GA domain once it has responsibility for Ops and Licensing after 2009. – Martin Robinson

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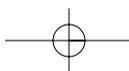
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Criminal checks killed off

AOPA has successfully fought off a campaign to subject all pilots to background criminal checks before they are allowed to fly – something that would have killed the trial lesson and had a disastrous effect on all of general aviation.

Over the past two years a requirement for criminal checks for all pilots has been repeatedly introduced to a European Commission regulation on common rules for civil aviation security. It has been vigorously promoted by Germany, with strong support from the Irish. IAOPA-Europe has mounted a concerted lobbying campaign of MEPs to have the requirement struck out, and the campaign has now borne fruit. Amendment 97 of the latest draft states that criminal checks for pilots “lie beyond the scope of this regulation.”



Martin Robinson says: “We owe a debt to Arunas Degutis MEP, who is the shadow rapporteur for Transport in the European Parliament as well as being chairman of AOPA Lithuania, for all the work he has put in to convince his colleagues that this was a bad idea. He has been tireless in explaining the true situation to all of them. He’s also been backed up by Jacob Pedersen of AOPA Denmark in a long-term lobbying exercise that has saved us all from a great deal of expense and bureaucracy.”

Professional pilots already undergo background checks before they are employed. The German proposal would have meant that

any criminal conviction in any European state would debar a pilot from flying, and that detailed criminal checks would have to be carried out before a student could fly, even for a trial lesson.

Martin Robinson warns, however, that there is no room for complacency in security matters and all pilots have a part to play in helping the authorities. “If you see anything unusual at an

airfield, report it to the police,” he says. “AOPA has formed a good relationship with Special Branch, who look on pilots as their ‘eyes and ears’ at GA airfields. We have so far been able to stave off demands for change from the small number of politicians who know nothing of GA, but consider it a threat.

“Similarly, we should be careful in our dealings with HM Customs and Excise, who are currently undertaking an audit of airfields. Before you fly abroad from an airfield, find out what the local customs arrangement is and conform to the notice requirements.” ■

Avgas refiner quits

The avgas market seems set to tighten further following ExxonMobil's announcement that it is to cease production at its refinery in Augusta, Sicily. The load will now be picked up by Total, who produce avgas at the La Mede refinery in France, and Shell, who make it in Holland. Both companies are currently operating close to capacity following BP's sale of the Coryton refinery, where avgas was once produced.

The only other producers in Europe are a small refinery in Poland, and Hjelmcö Oil in Sweden, which also makes an unleaded avgas. Hjelmcö's managing director Lars Hjelmberg, who is president of AOPA Sweden, says: “The market is decreasing, and making a boutique product like avgas does not make sense in a big refinery. In order to maintain quality you constantly have to upgrade your equipment, and big companies are reluctant to reinvest given the production volumes involved.”

Compared to car fuel, avgas production is tiny – in the UK we use one quarter of the fumes that evaporate from car tanks – and it is a difficult fuel to make and to transport. Quality requirements are much higher, and once tankers or pipelines have been used for avgas they cannot be used for an unleaded fuel without expensive and difficult cleaning.



Above: Lars Hjelmberg says big oil companies are reluctant to reinvest, given the production volumes involved

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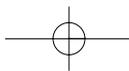
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DfT to dump CAA licences

It is feared that Colin McRae's family may be the first victims of the newly-contrived offence of flying with an expired licence, which could have a serious insurance implications.

Under JAR-FCL, licences must be renewed every five years at a cost of £65. AOPA fought the requirement on the ground that it is merely a money-grabbing exercise with no safety benefits, but could create enormous problems for aviators. The battle was lost, and renewable licenses have been issued since 2000.

The problems have been exacerbated by the fact that while the CAA warns professional licence holders that their licences are about to

expire, it does not send out any warning for private pilots. And if you forget to renew, it is open to an insurance company to refuse to pay out following an accident.

Now, the Department for Transport has confirmed they want current CAA licence holders to lose their 'grandfather rights' to non-expiring licences when they are forced to change over to EASA licences. Those who held national licences before the advent of JAR-FCL in 2000 still have licences for life, but their privileges are likely to be withdrawn.

In answer to a query from shadow Aviation Minister Julian Brazier MP, who was alerted to the situation by a story in *General Aviation*, Aviation Minister Jim Fitzpatrick MP says:

"EASA considers all licences to have a lifetime validity but requires that they are renewed at prescribed periods for administrative reasons in order to ensure that they are up to date. For JAR-FCL licences this period is currently a maximum of five years and this is likely to read across to other licences."

He adds that the proposed Light Aircraft Pilots Licence will be exempt – which further calls into question the point of the whole renewal exercise. There will be a consultation before the change is implemented.

Martin Robinson says: "Where is the safety benefit in this? I can see none. Renewing a licence is a bureaucratic rubber-stamping exercise which simply allows money to change hands. In their zeal to milk general aviation, the regulators have invented an offence which can have a disastrous effect on aviators' insurance policies." ■

Last chance on ATSOCAS

Comments on the CAA's consultation on the review of Air Traffic Control Services Outside Controlled Airspace (ATSOCAS) must be in by 14th December if they are to be considered.

Full details of the CAA's proposals can be seen at www.airspacesafety.com. As explained in past issues of this magazine, they propose to replace the RAS, RIS, FIS, Mandatory Control, Air Traffic Advisory and Approach Control arrangement to a simpler system of Basic, Traffic, Deconfliction and

Procedural.

Martin Robinson says: "These proposals will have an impact on all of us, particularly if you operate out of airfields that provide LARS. While AOPA is supportive of improving services we have some reservations. Unless these new service levels are resourced properly there is likely to be little or no improvement over what we have today.

"Often today's LARS units work well when traffic is light, but find themselves unable to offer more than the most basic information

service on busy summer weekends. The expansion of the service must be matched with an increase in resources. LARS funding is currently £1.6 million annually, and it seems impossible to improve the system within that figure. Where will the money come from? Military budgets are tight, and NATS – owned by the airlines – is not Lady Bountiful, even though increasingly the airlines are operating in Class G airspace. Eastern Airways, for example, now conducts 47 percent of its flights in Class G airspace.

"From our members' standpoint, GA pilots old and new will need to be trained to fully understand the new service, and when to ask for what service." ■

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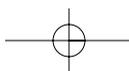
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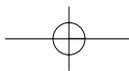
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Helicopters: got the right rating?

AOPA has intervened to successfully discourage the prosecution of a helicopter pilot by the CAA on a charge of flying without a type rating.

The member, from the West Country, had bought an MD helicopter and, in keeping with an insurance requirement, had travelled to America to undertake the factory safety course. There, he had obtained an FAA Temporary Airman's Certificate on the strength of his JAR licence in order to do the flying portion of the course.

Safety course completed, he returned to the UK and flew his helicopter. He was reported to the CAA, who pointed out that his Temporary Airman's Certificate was not an FAA licence, and that his UK licence had not been endorsed

with a type rating for the helicopter.

In the USA a helicopter licence entitles a pilot to fly any helicopter below a certain weight, and type conversion is left to the judgement of the pilot and his or her instructor. In the UK, in keeping with the ANO's stated aim of nannying us to death and costing us the earth to do it, you need a type rating for every different helicopter – even similar machines like the R44 and R22 need separate ratings and expensive annual check rides.

In this instance, the pilot was recommended for prosecution by the CAA, but after AOPA interceded counsel's opinion was sought and it was decided instead to issue a caution.

Martin Robinson says: "We are grateful to Ian Weston, head of enforcement at the CAA,

for taking this step when the situation was explained to him. AOPA supports wholeheartedly his aim to put rogues and unsafe operators out of business, and is pleased with the level of flexibility the enforcement branch shows in cases where transgressions are largely procedural." ■

Christmas holiday

The AOPA office will be closed for Christmas and New Year from 20th December until 2nd January 2008. Anything that is really urgent during that time can be emailed to martin@aopa.co.uk. A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all AOPA members from George Done, Martin Robinson and everyone at AOPA.

AOPA Members Working Group

The AOPA members working group met in September to discuss progress on the many tasks the group has taken on to improve AOPAs service to members.

The MWG is chaired by Chris Royle, who has been appointed to the AOPA board and who, along with Martin Robinson, carries the members' views to the board. The group has up to 14 members – participation varies at each quarterly meeting – ranging in experience from low-hours students to high-time IR holders.

Achievements to date include:

- Overhaul of the Wings scheme, with all new PPLs being awarded bronze wings. New Wings brochure designed and application form available on line via the web site. Emphasis on the fact that the scheme is intended to encourage becoming a better pilot.

- Initiation and subsequent involvement with the development of the new-look AOPA web site
- Creation of a web based forum associated with the new AOPA web site
- Current work streams that individuals or groups of members are involved in include;
- Development of mentoring schemes to encourage better flying skills, particularly instrument flying and navigation skills
- Influencing of discussions with EASA regarding development of a European IR
- Promotion of the class rating instructor (CRI) qualification
- Creation of regional and airfield AOPA representatives to promote benefits of AOPA membership and to provide advice and assistance to locally based pilots.
- Promotion of flying and to be a pilot.

The group meets again on December 1st at White Waltham. Any member wishing to attend should contact Chris Royle via info@aopa.co.uk. ■

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