

# Down in the boiler room



*AOPA's Executive Committee meets regularly to review progress in all the areas in which the Association has an interest and receives updates from those involved in each facet of the business at hand. We don't always cover the Executive Committee in the magazine because in fact, much of what's in the updates has already been reported in General Aviation as it forms part of the long-running saga, the narrative of AOPA that we present every two months. But quite often, what's not clear from the articles we run is just how many people – part-timers and volunteers – give time, effort and expertise to the common good, so we're reporting the November meeting of the Executive Committee here at some length.*

*Present were (clockwise from front in picture) Chris Royle, Charles Henry, Pauline Vahey, John Walker, David Ogilvy, Mick Elborn, Prof George Done, Pam Campbell and Martin Robinson. At the end of the meeting, everyone knows what everyone else is up to, and the rationale for future work is pretty much settled.*

## Single European Sky

Martin Robinson reported on the increasingly complex web of activity and planning around the Single European Sky, which is now coming to the stage where a large number of changes to the Rules of the Air are being settled upon. This will lead to significant alterations to the Air Law books, but the first manifestation is likely to be the loss of the 500-foot rule as we know it, and a requirement to equip with 8.33 radios.

One way and another AOPA has been dealing with 8.33 issues for more than 20 years. In the last five years, the Single

European Sky and SESAR have represented one of the major calls on AOPA's resources, but the results of AOPA's involvement are now beginning to show.

Martin told the Executive Committee that the Single Sky Rules of the Air are separated according to fields of interest, with Part A being the section which affects AOPA members. Part A had been effectively finalised some time ago, but it could not be published until they knew what exactly was in Part B – which primarily affects the Air Navigation Service Providers – because they didn't know whether Part A would have to be changed to accommodate Part B. It had recently

become clear that no substantive changes would be needed to Part A, so both sections are now going forward for a vote in the Single European Sky Committee.

Britain has two representatives on the Committee, Mark Swan – who runs the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy – and a DfT civil servant who keeps changing. Discussions with Mark Swan are held at NATMAC, the National Air Traffic Management Advisory Committee, which gives him advice he can either take or leave.

Separately, AOPA has also been directly involved for six years with SESAR, the Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research Project, a truly massive and ambitious programme which aims to create a whole new framework for future air traffic control. This is the group in which, back at the beginning, the



airlines wanted to know why there should be any such thing as 'uncontrolled airspace' – and had AOPA not been there, no-one else would have answered. They know now.

With regard to the 500 foot rule, at the moment it's a distance – you can fly at six feet as long as you're not within 500 feet of any person, vessel, vehicle or structure – but in future it will be a height limit. AOPA lobbied hard to maintain the status quo, but the European rule will be that you can only go below 500 feet if you're training. "How they intend to police that is beyond me," Martin said, "but that is the norm for European regulation."

The issue is complicated by the fact that the CAA also has its own future airspace plan running in parallel – the Directorate of Airspace Policy has a group called FASIG, the Future Airspace Industry Implementation Group, in train. Ben Stanley, who is co-ordinator of IAOPA's involvement in SESAR, also goes to FASIG. The intention is to have, by the end of 2012, a CAA/industry 'road map' leading to the development of a future airspace plan.

One aspect of this is the fact that the CAA is pushing for a raising of the transition altitude to 18,000 feet, but the French don't like the idea. The intention is to reduce the fragmentation of airspace in order to get airliners about by the most expeditious route, and the low transition altitude creates complexities with instrument approaches and departures,

with the quadrantal and semi-circular rules and so on. The aim is to allow a continuous climb or descent, which would save fuel, reduce ATC workload, and marry up with SESAR's plans for continuous 'trajectories' rather than flight plans. There was a possibility, Martin said, that more Class G airspace could thus be freed up.

Other aspects of the same issue include Performance Based Navigation and rationalisation of ground-based infrastructure – the loss of NDBs and VORs, which many in GA don't like. But the authorities' answer is that VFR flight doesn't need ground based aids and certainly doesn't pay for them, but if we wanted to cough up, we can...

Martin added that while Europe is behind SESAR one hundred percent, it is running into problems of funding. The programme was originally scheduled to cost €30 billion and be funded through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) but it was recently announced that the public contribution would only be €3 billion. The ultimate advantage to Europe would be, allegedly, €400 billion.

"SESAR was set up to improve the air traffic management system in Europe, which operates on 33 languages and 67 air traffic control centres, leading to fragmentation and inefficiency," Martin said. "The US has 20 ATC centres and

Europe's goal was to get down to a similar number. Now, the political reality is setting in – no country wants to sack controllers and shut down its own infrastructure. Nobody is playing the game properly in Europe."

The first SESAR requirement, he went on, was on 8.33 radio. "This month's SES meeting will vote on forward fit requirement by 2012, and retrofit by 2018, and the Single Sky Committee will probably say yes to that," he said.

"AOPA is telling the European Commission that there is no business case on 8.33 for GA, and there was broad agreement on that issue at the EC. Then they shuffled the staff, as they often do, so we now have to go over the old ground again. I'm meeting the EC Air Transport Commissioner Matthew Baldwin later this month and will impress upon him again that 8.33 contributes to an operational improvement in controlled airspace and is of benefit only to the airlines and GA should not get stuck with the cost.

"The original documents say there has to be a positive business case to support any new technology and equipment, and it was agreed where there was no business case, a way would be found to fund those who didn't benefit. Unfortunately, the Commission doesn't seem to be playing by their own rules." ■

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# Engineering and maintenance

AOPA Chairman Professor George Done, who looks after engineering and maintenance issues on behalf of members, gave the Executive Committee a run-down on the issues he had taken up since the last meeting. By their nature, these problems often take some time to resolve and call for a great deal of work on Prof Done's part. They include regulatory questions, disputes between maintainers and owners,

insurance queries – 'general aviation maintenance and engineering' covers a vast territory.

Prof Done reported on a number of issues over which he had been asked for help, including advising on a pre-purchase inspection, clarification of flight times for an aircraft logbook, advising on fuel bowser regulations and licensing, on an insurance claim following a prop strike, and on a newly-purchased aircraft on which an AD had not been complied with

and which would have to be scrapped.

A number of important meetings had also been attended, including EASA's Part M workshop in Cologne – see separate story in this issue – which should hopefully lead to a maintenance regime more suited to GA, while ensuring that maintainers, who have spent an average of £20,000 each on Part M, don't lose out. Another meeting had been held at the CAA in October to discuss proposals for the Generic Maintenance Programme (GMP) that will succeed the Light Aircraft Maintenance Programme (LAMP). There had been many aspects of LAMP that a recent EASA audit found unsatisfactory, and something must be devised that will satisfy them.

Several members of the AOPA Maintenance Working Group attended; Prof Done also reported on the most recent meeting of this group, which was attended by the CAA's Jim McKenna, where discussion centred on the Part M review, aircraft types on approval documents, maintenance of seat belts, Part 66 licences, orphan aircraft and other issues.

Martin Robinson ended by thanking George Done for his work and commenting that one result of AOPA's involvement in engineering issues had been to get costs down, and although results were a long time coming through, there were significant benefits to all of GA from AOPA's work. ■



**Left: Professor George Done presents his engineering and maintenance report as Pam Campbell, David Ogilvy and Mick Elborn look on**

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# The IMCR must be saved

The Executive Committee thought that AOPA should not abandon its traditional stance of not having a hard-and-fast 'AOPA policy' on particular issues, something that was being tested with regard to EASA's proposals on instrument flying. AOPA is a broad church and one man's meat is another man's poison, so the Association has always looked at the practical safety issues surrounding each proposal and made its views known without claiming to speak for every member. It has also encouraged all members to make individual comments on consultations.

The issue is particularly acute because of EASA's Notice of Proposed Amendment on instrument flying, out for consultation until November 23rd. International AOPA's representative on the FCL.008 working group which discussed the issue over the course of a year was Dr Michael Erb of AOPA Germany. He was particularly keen to ensure that progress towards a more achievable Instrument Rating, which IAOPA had been working on for 15 years with the JAA and later EASA, was continued. The NPA proposes significant improvements in this regard.

A more contentious issue is the En-Route Instrument Rating (EIR) where opinions are polarised, passionate and diametrically opposed. The EIR would allow a pilot who had passed the theoretical examinations for the full Instrument Rating and had undergone 15 hours of flying training in the cruise to fly in IMC on airways as long as the met forecast for his destination was for good VFR weather.

Proponents of the EIR say that anything that encouraged instrument flight training is a good thing, that it represents a 'stepping stone' to the full IR and that AOPA should support it. Opponents counter that any pilot who flew into IMC without meaningful training in instrument approaches would be guilty of bad airmanship, and any

regulation that encouraged such unsafe behaviour was to be deprecated, especially when with just 25 hours further instruction and no further theory exams he would be qualified to get back on the ground in bad weather.

Martin Robinson said he saw no reason to step back from AOPA's traditional position, which was to evaluate each situation and treat it on its merits while not claiming to speak for every member. He was not inclined to other support or oppose the EIR. AOPA would, however, question whether met forecasting could be brought up to the standard required to make the EIR safe. "As the safety regulator, the CAA will have to take a view on whether the standards the Met Office have to comply with are good enough to support the EIR," he said.

AOPA Chairman George Done added: "The TAFs and METARs are quite good but they are not good enough. If you are making a three-hour flight from central France to, say, the UK, and you have to get the weather right from one hour before to one hour after your arrival, I would suggest that the current forecasting standards, where a front can be 100 miles from its forecast position while the forecast is still judged to be accurate, are insufficient to ensure safety. If met reporting can be improved substantially, the EIR may be judged safe."

Charles Henry questioned whether the EIR could be decoupled from the UK IMC rating. "Unquestionably Europe will say that if we have the EIR, we don't need the IMC rating," he said. "Can the two really be considered in isolation?"

Martin Robinson said AOPA's considered that the IMC rating was vital and was lobbying at every level to preserve it. There were those at the highest level in the CAA who interpreted an article in *Flyer* magazine as saying that the IMC rating issue had 'gone away', but he had left them in no doubt that the issue was still alive. "We need to keep the benefits of the IMCR in the UK," he said. "I don't care what they call it, as long as the training and the benefits remain in place for all existing and new pilots. It may be that you have to have a national licence as well as an EASA licence, but the benefits must go beyond grandfather rights and Annex 2 aircraft."

European opposition to the IMC rating, he said, had been mis-stated. "It has become clear that German opposition was because ATC did not want more IFR traffic for which they were not getting paid. AOPA has fought hard to retain the exemption from en-route fees for sub-two-tonne aircraft in the face of serious opposition from the airlines, and that was what concerned the German ANSPs."

Martin said he had asked the AOPA Instructor Committee to produce a point-by-point account of the differences between the EIR and the IMC rating in order to demonstrate to the CAA that the two are wholly different and that the European proposal does not begin to address the same issues as the IMCR.

\*EASA and Instrument Flying, page 10 ■

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# Safety and cost

Martin Robinson also made mention of a meeting of a new CAA group which aims to look at how safety can be improved without increasing regulation and cost. The correlation between cost and safety seemed to be poorly grasped; at its simplest, more regulatory cost equated with less pilot currency, to the detriment of safety. It was important to confine regulation only to what was essential in order to contain cost.

Martin had also proposed that pilot-to-pilot discussions should be considered, rather than simply taking a pilot to court or cautioning him following an incident. "The point



## Meetings, meetings...

Martin reported that he'd had recent meetings with Matthew Baldwin, head of Air Transport at the European Commission, and that another such meeting was planned for late November. Andrew Haines, Chief Executive of the CAA, had visited the AOPA offices for discussions with himself, George Done and David Ogilvy. There had also been meetings with representatives of Honeywell who obviously had a commercial interest but could be very helpful in providing technical assistance to AOPA to underpin our case at SESAR and elsewhere. Martin said: "An organisation called EUROCAE sets standards for aviation equipment, and we need to know how equipment that is specific to GA's needs can be developed relatively cheaply. EUROCAE's American equivalent RTCA must work together with Europe to ensure that GA can buy equipment off the shelf in America that is certificated for use here – plug and play, in effect. This is something we've been working on for many years, and Honeywell can help."

would be to sit down and really dig down into the reasons why something has happened, to get a better grasp of what the problems are and improve our understanding of how and where we can act to improve matters," he said. "From the individual's point of view, we could perhaps identify a bespoke improvement programme, perhaps getting him into the AOPA Mentoring Scheme – there are many possibilities. But while punishment and monetary fines have a deterrent effect, they represent a very limited approach to the problem.

"The bad pilots out there need to adopt a whole different attitude if the few are not to spoil it for the many." ■

## Members Working Group

In his report on the AOPA Members Working Group, its Chairman Chris Royle said it was responsible for some considerable achievements during its life, and if the people had been available to do the work that was suggested it could achieve more. Recently the MWG had asked questions about AOPA corporate governance which he thought had been fully answered. "It's an interesting and eclectic group of people," Chris said. "Martin Robinson set it up six years ago when there was a lot of traffic on the web forums questioning AOPA, and it is certainly the case that people on the Members Working Group have responded to criticisms from the point of view of knowledge and understanding, and that those criticisms have receded. Mike Cross in particular has written good, reasoned responses. One thing we haven't managed to get right is the system of airfield and regional AOPA reps, which is the key part of growing AOPA membership, fostering two-way communication and getting across AOPA's message."

Chris said that after six years he intended that the next Members Working Group would be his last as Chairman. "It's a good time to think about the future direction of the MWG, whether it should become a project group... but it's time for new blood, and perhaps a change of direction."

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# Money, money, money

The CAA's latest proposals for their new scheme of charges has been published, and if they survive the consultation process – as it expected – they will be imposed from April 1st 2012. Costs will rise in the medical sector, where they have already gone up quite astronomically in the recent past, and there are a lot of new charges because of the way in which FCL is changing. Martin Robinson said: "Every single course that a club offers will have to be approved, and there will be a separate approval fee for each course."

"Most of our members are not directly affected by the scheme of charges, which fall on the businesses. They have to pass the costs on to the consumer – our members – who see that costs are rising but don't know exactly where the increases come from."

"If you can't sleep at night, go to [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk), click on 'consultations and letters of intent' on the left side of the screen, then 'view open consultations' and look for 'CAA charges 2012/1013'."

Consultation finishes at the end of the year and the new scheme will be signed off by the Secretary of State for implementation in April.

# Wind turbines and aeroplanes

*In his aerodromes report, David Ogilvy warned that the proliferation of wind turbines in the vicinity of landing sites was one of the biggest problems affecting the safety of general aviation today. The issue was unlikely to go away, as more and more people woke up to the true extent of the subsidies available; moreover the new National Policy Planning Framework will make it so much more difficult to object to such applications. Although many of the sites involved are small airstrips they house a growing percentage of GA aircraft, many of which are owned by AOPA members.*

*David said that since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, AOPA has been asked for help from Fishburn, Croft Farm, Clough Farm, Strubby, Manby, Hall Farm, Glenswinton and Sturgate (wind turbines), Baxterley (planning problems over a new hangar), Beverley (de-licensing), users of Filton (seeking AOPA support for opposing closure), and Ashcroft (right of access).*

*"An unusual activity recently was a panic eleventh-hour request for help on the day before a debate on GA in the House of Lords," David went on. "AOPA was asked to provide details of problems affecting small aerodromes and airstrips. I had no difficulty in finding enough issues! The request was from Lord Sharkey, who until recently owned an aeroplane based at Denham.*

*"However, all too often requests for help come in at the eleventh hour, by which time it is usually too late to do much about them. I would once again stress that people should get in touch at the earliest possible stage, as soon as they know they may have a problem."*

*David concluded by saying he was hoping to simplify the procedure for handling regular requests, such as those relating to wind farms, by producing a standard information sheet that will provide basic information.*

# The doctor is in

Martin Robinson paid a special tribute to AOPA's medical adviser – and Board member – Dr Ian Perry, who he said was an unsung hero of the Association. A world-renowned expert on aviation medicine, he was available at the end of the phone or by email to any AOPA member with a problem, and had willingly given over a huge amount of his time down the years to helping members resolve issues with their medicals. "He also handles calls from GPs with concerns about NPPL applicants," Martin said. "We don't mention him much but he does a lot of work behind the scenes."

# AOPA's Aware winners

Every month the names of new AOPA members go into a hat to be drawn for an Airbox Aware, the excellent GPS-based anti-infringement tool that warns of controlled airspace nearby. August's winner was Kathryn Burnham, and the September winner was Christopher Luncheon.

Congratulations to both. All new members are eligible for the draw, and the Aware has a retail value of £150.

*\*Airbox Aerospace and NATS have won the Honeywell Bendix Trophy for aviation safety following their collaboration over the Airbox Aware. The award is presented by the US-based Flight Safety Foundation, an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving aviation safety. The trophy was handed to Airbox's co-couder Tom Hedges at a ceremony in Las Vegas in October. William Voss, President and CEO of the Flight Safety Foundation, said: "This is the sort of innovation that addresses a desperate need in general aviation in the UK. It provides a new tool for pilots so that they can safely avoid restricted airspace with minimal user input. The Bendix Trophy is our small way to recognise this achievement."*

*Tom Hedges said: "It's a great honour for the teams at Airbox and NATS to get recognition for this exciting project, which has produced such great results in the UK where we have seen significant reductions in airspace infringements as a result of its use by the general aviation community."*

