

# General Aviation

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**Front cover:**  
dH Chipmunk  
Photo: Keith Wilson

## Chairman's message

### AOPA works, GA benefits

In the December 2008 edition of *General Aviation* there was a report on the successful outcome of the two year long series of negotiations regarding the tax on avgas. To place this in a historical context, mention was made of a previous negotiation by AOPA in the early 1980s that resulted in the duty for avgas being fixed at half that for motor vehicles. This important concession has remained in place in the intervening period and has saved the general aviation industry many millions of pounds. The new regime more or less effectively continues the concession.

At AOPA, we have had some enquiries about the background to the earlier concession and, for the benefit of those whose flying experience does not go back that far, I provide a few extra details as follows. The fuel duty scheme in place many years ago (including when I first gained my PPL in 1953) was such that flying clubs could get a tax rebate on fuel used for training. The clubs paid for the fuel at the normal rate, i.e. duty at motor car rate, and then claimed a rebate through the good offices of ABAC, the Association of British Aero Clubs and Centres, now incorporated into the British Light Aviation Centre Ltd (which trades as AOPA). This system was incredibly unwieldy and, understandably, there was strong motivation to move to a more streamlined method. The negotiations with the government department at the time led to a simple halving of the fuel duty for all avgas, regardless of whether it was used for training or not. Thus all pilots benefited, not just those undergoing training.



The hours flown per year in general aviation is currently around 1.2 million and has not changed much over the past 25 years. At an average of 30 litres per hour and 30 pence per litre being half the current duty in today's money gives about £9 per hour being saved, or an average of £300 per pilot. Annually in GA, this is about £10m saved overall, or £250m over the intervening period. These are pretty rough and ready sums, but they provide a ball-park figure.

The individuals to thank for this concession were Ron Campbell, then Chairman of AOPA, Danny Forman of GAMTA (now the BBGA) and Eric Thurston of both AOPA and GAMTA. Sadly, Ron is no longer with us, but David Ogilvy, Past Chairman and Past President of AOPA UK, who was at that time Vice Chairman, remembers the successful outcome very well. 'A great win!' was his description, although he was disappointed that the GA community did not seem to be as appreciative as it might have been. Perhaps, he reflected, the publicity had been muted so as not to upset the motoring public.

The Christmas and New Year period is normally a fairly quiet time for AOPA, and this year has been no different. However, on the first day the office opened after the holiday period, we received the exciting and welcome news, following an IAOPA ballot for President and Regional Vice Presidents, that our estimable Chief Executive, Martin Robinson, had been elected by the Chairmen of the 66 constituent AOPA countries as Senior Vice President for the European region of IAOPA. Martin already devotes a great deal of time to IAOPA (Europe) and this appointment effectively re-defines the level at which he will now operate, although, in regard to the day-to-day work relating to IAOPA (Europe), he is already shouldering many of the related tasks. The adjective "Senior" has a significant connotation because it means he is deputy to the current and also recently elected IAOPA President, Craig Fuller, the newly appointed AOPA US President. Members will appreciate just how much we are now engaged with European based activities, EASA and SESAR dominating, and AOPA UK is indeed fortunate to have as its Chief Executive such a dedicated, hard working and apparently tireless individual as Martin is. The regular feature in *General Aviation*, the "Chief Executive's diary", is a testament to this.

AOPA's work is totally dedicated to the viability and furtherance of GA and I hope, as invited by the flyer attached to this magazine, that you will use every opportunity to spread the word amongst those non-AOPA pilots and aircraft owners who have been happy to receive the benefits.

*George Done*