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Front cover:
Tiger Moth
 Photo: Keith Wilson

Chairman's message

Sustainable general aviation

December 2010 and January this year so far have conspired to keep me out of the air for rather too long, so one of my New Year resolutions is to do a lot more flying to compensate. But, even at my gentle level, it is becoming more expensive to take to the air as many groups and syndicates such as my own have discovered. Unless you fly for business or professional reasons, it is your disposable income that pays for your enjoyment and freedom of the airspace, so the tendency is to fly less. There can come a point at which the activity is unsustainable, when the overall cost of flying ceases to be compensated by one's satisfaction and reward. A personal judgement here is involved, unlike in business, where the financial bottom line dictates the outcome. But business and private flying in GA are inextricably linked, because they are interdependent. Designers and manufacturers of aircraft need pilots and operators to buy their products, maintainers need owners to place their aircraft to them for engineering work and checks, flying schools need pilots for *ab initio* training, renewal and revalidation of licences and ratings, and to hire their aeroplanes. Even commercial air transport depends on GA to provide its pilots, although one or two airlines like to think otherwise. If GA becomes significantly less sustainable, then the adverse impact is felt widely, way beyond the private pilot community.



One of the costs incurred in keeping an aeroplane flying results from regulatory activity, which is not dissimilar from tax in the way it pops up everywhere, for example, in approvals, authorisations, certification and licensing of pilots, aerodromes, maintenance and design organisations, aircraft and equipment designers and manufacturers, etc. In any sphere, regulation becomes a necessity when the public at large perceives a need to protect itself from accidents or other unwelcome events, and in the 1930s, civil aviation was such that regulation became vital. Being a bureaucratic activity, it follows Parkinson's Law in having a strong tendency to grow beyond what is needed practically and to become self-sustaining and beyond. Policy and related regulation are areas that AOPA addresses through political pressure and lobbying and, indeed, this activity has been the topic of discussion many times in this column over the past few years. Too much regulation is known to be bad for business, and the first page of the website of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills quotes "The five principles of good regulation" which are lifted from the Hampton Review of 2005 (mentioned in *General Aviation* for October 2005 and February 2006). These are transparency, accountability, proportionality, consistency and targeting. One of the more interesting statements is "Regulators should recognise that a key element of their activity will be to allow, or even encourage, economic progress..."

Comparing what we see emanating from EASA on licensing and maintenance, our own CAA seems a paragon of virtue. It is singularly unfortunate that whilst the CAA does its best to conform to Hampton, EASA can impose a regulatory regime that would not even see the light of day under UK scrutiny, so how does the government square up to this? The fact is, it doesn't. The Parliament European Scrutiny Committee is engaged at a much higher level on Parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law and as presently constituted is unable to deal with the level of detail required. So EASA gets away with it! It has already shrugged off the European Parliament resolution of 3rd February 2009 that was overwhelmingly adopted on an "Agenda for Sustainable Future in General and Business Aviation", hailed by some at the time as a 'dream document' for GA. The detail of EASA's failure to address the sensible and far-sighted recommendations in the EP report is admirably summed up by Martin Robinson in his article "EASA – the hope, the reality" in the December 2010 *General Aviation*. The way in which regulation seeps into every corner of GA provides it with a powerful influence on the future viability of GA. IAOPA Europe, despite its considerable committee work and lobbying, clearly has more work to do in getting EASA to recognise that regulation can be devised that actually serves to encourage business and thereby to keep GA sustainable, but with your continuing support it will most certainly do so!

George Done