

Is there anybody there?

New figures brought out at the CAA's Finance Advisory Committee confirm the apparently inexorable decline of private pilot licence issues, with the total for 2009/10 standing at 2552. This compares with 2823 for 08/09 and continues a trend that effectively means that the private section of the general aviation training industry is shrinking by about £1.5 million a year.

Over the same period, professional licence issues fell from 2908 to 2611, an even greater financial shrinkage for the commercial flight training end.

Worse still, only half of PPLs are now renewing their licences at the five-year stage. While a percentage of the lost souls may simply have forgotten to renew, there is little doubt that the majority have forsaken aviation.

AOPA's Chief Executive Martin Robinson, who sits on the Finance Advisory Committee, says: "Every effort of the CAA, EASA, AOPA and all pilots' organisations must be bent towards reversing this decline if the general aviation industry is to survive for future generations. We must all accept that it is made needlessly expensive

and needlessly complicated, and it cannot compete with all the other calls on a discretionary spend that is increasingly squeezed by the recession."

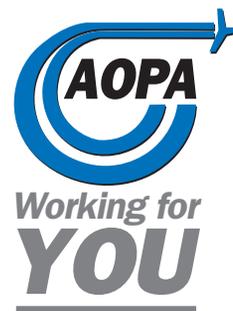
The average annual number of PPL issues over the past decade has been around 3,000, and a decline of 500 translates into something in excess of £3 million per annum lost to the training industry alone – not counting the losses to airfields, maintenance organisations, self-fly hire outfits, fuel providers and other concerns. The recession cannot be blamed, as the decline in numbers continued even as we were all spending money like drunken sailors.

Robinson says: "Let's face it, things are not going to improve under EASA. We must look at every aspect of our industry to establish why we are not attracting new blood, and why we are failing to keep people in aviation. Can the schools and flying clubs make themselves more attractive to the customers? Are we bearing down on costs as much as we might? Is our offer right for the modern world?"

"The CAA and EASA must genuinely address whether they are regulating only

those things which absolutely need to be regulated, with the associated costs and inconvenience. Wherever their requirements can be brought more into harmony with real need in the modern world, it should be done.

"Perhaps we can start by asking the CAA why, given the reduction in numbers, it needs so many people in its Personnel Licensing Department. PPL issues are running at about 10 a working day; how many people do you need to handle that volume of business. Is it not time, as AOPA has been urging for years, to allow Examiners to issue licenses, so that all the CAA needs to do is process the paperwork in the same way the DVLA does, where volumes are hundreds of times higher and the work is largely automatic. When the industry must pay the entire cost of PLD plus six percent profit, we ought to have a say in how things are done." ■



N-reg – between the hammer and the anvil

Pilots and operators of aircraft on the N-register continue to be the meat in the sandwich as Europe and America butt heads over trade issues, and the future does not look promising. EASA's proposals to hamstring the N-register operator in Europe have been put back to 2014 and are now said to be subject to bilateral negotiations which may or may not produce a workable compromise – and the evidence of recent history indicates that no user-friendly solution will be found. In fact, it seems we have won a two-year grace period before the boot goes in.

At its December meeting the EASA Comitology Committee, the body which approves EASA's decisions before they go to the European Commission, postponed from 2012 to 2014 the adoption of EASA's proposals on third country licensing. In the meantime the committee hopes the matter can be dealt with by way of bilateral agreements between Europe and America. In fact the first bilateral – known as a BASA – is due in spring, although it makes no mention of licensing. The hope is that once it is signed, flight crew licensing agreements can be added later by way of annexes. Unfortunately the negotiations on bilaterals have been characterised by inertia, obstruction and dogged pursuit of



Above: N-registration operators may only have been given a two-year stay of execution

self-interest, on both sides.

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 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 economically viable for many pilots. They propose instead a validation process which 'grandfathers' existing license holders, which would actually deliver what the EASA Basic Regulation requires in respect of oversight.

The organisations' joint document says that it supports the idea of having the issues settled by bilateral agreement, but →

→ cautions that such agreements are unlikely to be in force by April 2012, when EASA takes over responsibility for licensing. "We are greatly concerned that any solutions based on these agreements simply cannot be achieved by 2012/13, or provide the necessary legal certainty for the general aviation industry," the document says. "Therefore it would be best to merge the implementation of the pilot licensing rules with the



implementation and expansion of the above BASAs, to guarantee a smooth transition, minimise the impact on pilots and ensure continued safe operations in Europe.

"We remain convinced that appropriate, multi-year transition measures provide the means by which to keep business and general aviation flying, whilst allowing the institutions to meet their commitments. Indeed, as stated in the Commission's own Communication on General and Business Aviation, the *'high proportion of SMEs and*

not-for-profit organisations in this sector calls for special vigilance in proper application of proportionality'. If this proposal is adopted without the measures outlined above, it will adversely affect safety and negatively impact jobs in Europe and beyond – at a time when our industry is still in recession – in addition to the thousands of European pilots who stand to be adversely affected."

The letter was accepted by Eckhardt Seebohm of the EC's Transport department at a meeting with Martin Robinson in Brussels on December 3rd and went out to all Comitology Committee members ahead of the December 7th meeting which resulted in the delay to EASA's third-country licensing proposals and its link to the BASAs.

AOPA's lobbying of members of the EASA Comitology Committee and European Commission indicated that while they were wary of the damage EASA's proposals would cause, their main concern was the ability of national aviation

authorities to handle the change from national to EASA licences, and they thought the introduction of new third-country rules at the same time might be too much to cope with.

Robinson says: "The difficulty when it comes to lobbying on these issues is that everyone agrees with you, but won't change position. Nobody claims there is a safety issue, everyone accepts that the economic damage will be substantial, yet the status quo is impossible to maintain.

"This is solely a political issue, and EASA is able to resort political machinations to drive it through. The Comitology Committee passed EASA's FCL package because national authorities need time to set up their licensing systems, and they've only got until April 2012. They extended the deadline on third-country licenses as a concession to the industry's fears. FCL now goes to the European Parliament for ratification, but the Parliament cannot amend it – they can only accept or reject the whole package.

Chief executive's diary:

A twig to beat America

More than ever, we need AOPA's international network now. EASA's assault on third-country licences cannot be tackled in Britain, it cannot even be tackled in Europe; the fight goes on in London and Cologne, Brussels, Montreal and Washington. Aviation regulation increasingly transcends national boundaries, and bodies like EASA and ICAO only recognise international representative organisations. Once again, I thank all those who contribute to the work we're doing through membership of AOPA; to all those who don't contribute, I ask that you consider joining now. Without funds, the battle is lost.

The FCL third-country issue has dominated everything else for the past two months; while we were sorting out the joint GAMA, EBAA and IAOPA message to the EASA Comitology Committee (see separate story in these pages) I was talking to politicians and civil servants all over Europe – some, like Jackie Foster MEP, have been very helpful indeed – and all the time the phone was ringing off the hook. Having sorted out our joint approach I went to Brussels on December 3rd with Michael Erb of AOPA Germany and others to meet Eckhardt Seebohm of the Air Transport Directorate at the EC's Transport Department, DGMOVE, who is chairman of the Comitology Committee.

Mr Seebohm made no pretence that this was a safety issue; all sides have accepted from the start that safety was not part of the argument, so there was a limited return to campaigning on that platform. A lot of European politicians I have lobbied have a

very simplistic view of the process – you couldn't own and drive a car forever in Europe on American papers, or vice versa, so why should aircraft be any different? Ah, we say, but what if you went to America with your car and your licence only to be told I'm sorry, we don't recognise that type of car here, you'll have to scrap it... or you have to spend a six-figure sum replacing the axles before you can carry on driving... and if you want to drive in the rain, even though you have been doing it safely for decades you're going to have to study for a year and pass seven written examinations on the composition of raindrops, the workings of the machines the rescue services use to cut into crashed cars and the internal processes of the car insurance market... and yes, we accept that this won't make anybody any safer, but it does make a lot of money for the civil service and I'm sure you don't grudge it to us... you'd think it was protectionist, wouldn't you. That's exactly what happens in aviation. Sort some of these problems out, as EASA promised but failed to do, and we'd happily get any papers you want.

Mr Seebohm agreed to submit the joint letter to the Comitology Committee, and indeed he sent it out with the calling papers for the meeting on the 7th, when the Committee passed EASA's FCL plans but ordered a two-year derogation on the third-country licence issue. They finessed the issue by saying it should be part of a Bilateral Safety Agreement, or BASA, with the United States. Whether this is more than a stay of execution is moot. There's no guarantee that



anything will come of the BASA negotiations on which this aspect of licensing now hangs. But if we don't fight, in London, in Cologne, in Brussels, in Washington, we'll lose for sure. The EC has trade scores to settle, and we're a stick to beat the Americans with; trouble is, we're a tiny stick, and the Americans are thick-skinned – the stick will break before their heads cave in.

Pursuing the issue to the European Parliament, which is where it goes now, is of limited value; the Parliament cannot amend the package, or pass some parts of it and not others. Either they pass it, or all the babies go out with the bathwater. They don't want to delay FCL because states have little enough time as it is to prepare for its implementation. But a lot of groups still have major issues with FCL, including the airlines – if we could all get together we might have a chance, but there are so much political manoeuvring within aviation, and some don't want to fall out with EASA or the EC. The process is flawed because they can railroad regulation through without regard for consultation or any semblance of democracy. The focus now on getting the FAA to realise the full implications of what's going on, and to take the issues seriously in the bilateral talks.

I left off my last diary on November 16th, and the following day we had a long telecon with our Brussels lobbyists and lawyers Hogan Lovells covering our tactics for 2011. Their Washington office was in on the call, as was John Sheehan at IAOPA headquarters in Frederick, Maryland, and Craig Spence of AOPA US. We reviewed wins and losses during 2010 and set out a number of targets for Hogan Lovells for the coming year. It's a million miles from the old days of volunteer



Left: general aviation is being crushed by wars trade over heavier metal

EASA has bound up the baby and the bathwater in such a way that the Parliament cannot therefore throw it out. But it is clear that Europe is ready to cut off general aviation's nose to spite American faces.

"The Europeans and the Americans both say they want full reciprocity from the other side, while secretly trying to give less than they receive. Full reciprocity would be great for general aviation as long as we had a sensible validation system; imagine if you had an FAA IR and the process for converting it to a European equivalent was simple and sensible. But how likely is that? At the root of the argument is government support for Boeing and Airbus, and everything from downline repair station charges to pilot licensing is governed by that. We are small cogs in a large intercontinental dispute, and bigger wheels →

groups talking informally to friends in the Air Ministry; today it's all politics, and if you don't have the money you won't even get to the starting line. Thanks again for your help.

One of the issues that came out of the meeting was the new aviation agreement which is likely to be signed in the early part of this year; it's almost entirely concerned with commercial air transport, but that's one of our fundamental problems – EASA makes rules for CAT and GA is caught up as collateral damage. At the moment, those who suffer are the traditional Group A aircraft and their pilots; but EASA wants ultimately to take responsibility for Annex II aircraft, and we have to do what we can to dissuade them.

On Saturday November 20th I attended the British Women Pilots Association Wings Day and gave a presentation behind the philosophy behind AOPA's Wings Scheme. The BWPA have really grasped the concept of the Wings Scheme and they are terrific at promoting it – well done to Pauline Vahey, Caroline Gough-Cooper and all the BWPA people. This year is the centenary of the first British woman pilot getting her wings – the BWPA has big plans to promote it, and AOPA will give them all the help we can.

On the Monday we had an internal IAOPA telecon led by Ben Stanley and Michael Erb, IAOPA-Europe's focal points on SESAR, and including Claus Peter Sternemann from AOPA Germany and Roland Becker of AOPA Switzerland, looking at the work packages we've been allocated under the SESAR Joint Undertaking and working out how they're going to be tackled. Once again, it all takes money – see above. We've got some personnel help on this from Julian Scarfe of PPL/IR, with whom AOPA is working closely. On the 25th I met with David Earl and Alan South of PPL/IR to discuss closer ties. We're taking mainly about

SESAR and PNB – Performance Based Navigation.

On December 7th, while the Comitology Committee was sitting, I went to Brussels for a 'consultation body workshop' to look at how Eurocontrol will consult with its stakeholders in future. IAOPA has been given a seat on a new, combined consultation body, the Agency Advisory Body (AAB), which comprises both military and civilian organisations. Its main role is to give advice to the Director General and the eight directors of Eurocontrol. The AAB will have eight permanent Expert Working Teams to provide advice. Eurocontrol has little interest in VFR operations, but because of things like 8.33 radio and Mode-S mandates, we have to be in there on the ground floor.

On December 10th I was in Cologne for a meeting of the EASA Advisory Body, at which I spoke about FCL, Comitology and the impact of FCL on different parts of the industry. But the 300-pound gorillas on the EAB, like Rolls-Royce and Airbus, have no interest in pilot licensing, and they have their own fish to fry.

Three days later I had Michael Richardson from Ofcom in the office, briefing me on their decision on radio spectrum pricing. He said they'd listened to industry and were going to reduce the charges – start date would be March 2012, and the full fees would be phased in over five years. It's a pointless new tax on general aviation, but it could have been worse. We've saved everybody a bit of money, and we were always on a loser.

Back to Brussels on the 15th for a meeting of the European Commission's Industry Consultation Body, which discussed the Single European Sky Rules of the Air Implementation Rules. While the revised text is better than it was – for example, the plan to make the 500-foot rule into a height

rather than a distance will not apply, if you're on a training flight – they're taking all the ICAO recommendations and making them a regulation. This is a blunderbuss approach which is unattractive. Here in the UK the CAA has filed hundreds of differences with ICAO, many of them for very good reason. Are we now forced to abandon those differences at the behest of countries with a poorer safety record than ours? It would seem so.

On the 20th I met with Tim Scorer, AOPA's honorary solicitor, and Lloyds underwriters QBE to discuss concerns about poor record keeping in GA and the impact it has on their business. And then it snowed... and we had the Christmas break, and New Year, and by the time I got back into the office I had hundreds of emails, and not much of it was spam...

On January 11th I attended the CAA's Finance Advisory Committee, which was a depressing start to 2011 – see separate story in these pages. The main thing was to consider responses to CAA consultation on increase in its charges – it's gone for a 3 percent increase across the board. The airlines wanted a 28 percent increase on some GA schemes which are underperforming, saying they shouldn't be 'cross-subsidising' things like charges for air displays. Well, as long as a single air display produces more fuel tax for the government than UK airlines have in all of history, their arguments on 'cross subsidy' are hollow. The CAA has reduced its costs by £2.5 million and says it won't make the six percent profit the government demands that it make. With the Department for Transport wanting to offload the £1.5 million cost of the Enforcement Branch onto the CAA, I don't think we'll see charges come down this year, do you?

Martin Robinson

→are going to grind us up.”

Over the holiday period AOPA was working to put some heat under the

American side in order to get the BASA issue taken seriously.

Martin Robinson says: “They’re waking up to the full implication of what EASA is proposing. It will have a major effect on their flight training industry, as well as on aircraft sales. Through AOPA US

we have been able to take the problem right to the door of the FAA Administrator Randy Babbitt, but time is short and we need action on bilaterals now. We recognise that we’re being used as a tool to beat the Americans with – we have no option but to go along with it.”

Some owners and pilots with European-registered aircraft have complained that the European AOPAs should not be campaigning on behalf of third-country registered aircraft and pilots with foreign qualifications. But it’s not the case that N-

reg owners and pilots will simply transfer to a European register; many will disappear from the industry altogether.

Robinson says: “They make a major contribution to GA in Europe by using airfields, maintenance organisations, fuel and facilities, and many of them simply could not operate on European registers. The FAA Instrument Rating is of course the biggest single reason for flying on the N-register, and EASA is not likely to come up with something that will make the EASA IR as accessible as the American equivalent.”

In 2005 EASA’s Executive Director Patrick Goudou said he would attack the third-country registration issue by ‘making sure there were no advantages to being on the N-register’. Robinson says: “In fact, he has found that too hard, and has resorted to the destructive expedient of forcing the N-register out with a legal bludgeon. 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.”

There are believed to be 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.

Now that the Comitology Committee has put off the issue, the pressure will have to be kept up to ensure that the BASAs take licensing into account, and that appropriate transition measures be put in place after April 2012. ■



IMC rating – how’s your grandfather?

EASA’s concession of ‘grandfather rights’ to holders of the UK IMC rating still needs to be underpinned by mechanisms which will allow such a rating to be attached to an EASA licence, or allow it to be attached to a national licence useable on EASA aircraft. No such mechanisms currently seem to exist, and something will have to be created to get around the problem.

No-one is yet sure how this is to be accomplished, although the UK CAA is determined that the IMC rating should be preserved in the interests of safety. As things stand, national licenses will be required to fly what are called ‘Annex II’ aircraft – mostly microlights, amateur-built aircraft, ex-military or vintage aircraft – while EASA licenses will be required to fly everything else. So at the moment, it would seem that the IMC rating can be attached only to licenses for aircraft on which the privileges of the IMC rating cannot be exercised.

Geoffrey Boot, chairman of the AOPA Instructor Committee, says: “Happily, the CAA is committed to the preservation of the IMC rating and is taking a very pragmatic approach. The process is far from clear, but I am confident that some way will be found.”

EASA’s Notice of Proposed Amendment on instrument flying is to be promulgated shortly, but little is expected of it. While the

IMC rating is widely seen as one of the greatest single contributions to general aviation safety in the UK, the NPA will make no substantive mention of it. The NPA is due out shortly, and we will be asking members for their comments on it.

A system in which grandfather rights are accorded to IMC rating holders alone is undesirable, and AOPA continues to campaign for new pilots to be allowed the benefit of the rating in Britain. It would be nothing short of bizarre if instructors were flying with IMC holders in order to maintain their currency and prepare them for renewals while being prevented by law from teaching the same lifesaving skills to new pilots. Geoffrey Boot says: “As I see it, the key is to allow national authorities like the CAA as much flexibility as they deem necessary in order to provide the best possible training for conditions in each country.”

Opposition to the IMC rating across Europe has largely faded away, and it’s now difficult to find anyone who is against it. In talks with AOPA’s Martin Robinson, representatives of the European Cockpit Association say they see the merits of the rating and now accept that contrary to what was claimed at EASA’s FCL.008 Working Group the IMC rating is not “an instrument rating with 20 percent of the training” with a dubious safety record, but represents a major contribution to aviation safety. ■

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Olympic restrictions still cloudy

At time of writing there's still no hard news on proposed restrictions to flying in the Home Counties during the 2012 Olympic Games, and AOPA is pressing the Department for Transport to publish details as soon as possible to allow people to make plans.

It is said that 'lines have been drawn on charts' but the charts are not yet being made available. The risk is that if they are published too late, there may be little time for amendment following consultation. NATS has planned a meeting for January 27th at which more details may be revealed; watch the AOPA website www.aopa.co.uk for updated information.

The Olympic Committee is expecting 150 Heads of State and an unspecified number of sponsors, VIPs, athletes and spectators to arrive in general aviation aircraft. Aerodromes looking to benefit include Lydd and Biggin Hill, Southend, North Weald, Farnborough, Luton, Oxford, and Stapleford. Unfortunately, in keeping with the stated aim of making this 'the greenest Olympics ever', little thought has been given to moving these people across the ground. No provision has been made for helicopter access, which means they will have to be moved by road at a time when traffic will be at its heaviest. Delays and security problems will result. Furthermore, there are only 24 car parking spaces at the Olympic Stadium – very green, but sensible?

The government commissioned a consultancy to report on helicopter use during the Olympics. Martin Robinson says: "I don't know how much they paid for it but I could have done it on the back of an envelope in ten minutes and charged them nothing. It makes no recommendations but merely says this number of helicopters will cause this much disturbance... black is black, white is white and the government must choose what colour it wants.

"The blanket ban on helicopters envisaged by the organisers cannot be imposed, in part because the Olympic Committee requires that helicopters be used for signal relay and aerial TV work during events like the road cycling and the marathon. Helicopter operators need to know now what will be possible. The government is vowing 'business as usual' during the Olympics, and we aim to ensure the aviation business is included in that. One issue is that if they claim to be imposing flight restrictions for security reasons, no compensation is payable to those who will lose out." ■

No provision has been made for helicopter access to the Olympic site



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What is an airprox?

AOPA Instructor Committee chairman Geoffrey Boot explains the workings of the UK Airprox Board

When people find that I sit on the UK Airprox Board almost always one of the questions is: "What exactly is an airprox?" Understandable from the non pilots, but perhaps worrying when it comes to those still flying. A number of interesting, sometimes heated, discussions later I find myself struggling to define an airprox.

In many cases it seems to be a matter of perception. From a GA perspective, where we're flying on a see and avoid basis – VFR – there seems to be a wide range of situations that cause pilots or air traffic controllers to file an airprox.

Of course the Airprox Board considers all types of airprox and, while I sit with my fellow GA pilot Hugh Woodsend as GA representatives, we are also involved in discussions of those that occur in commercial air transport (CAT), military and helicopter operations, etc.

The FAA have a definition that any aircraft that flies within 500 ft of another could be classed as an airprox, but I think that's far too tight a definition, particularly when it comes to VFR traffic. We all know that in a busy circuit environment it is quite easy to join and fly within 500 ft of another aircraft with no risk to either, as long as we know where other aircraft are. I think that may be the nub of it: 100m is quite a long way when you know what someone's doing, but when an aircraft suddenly appears in your windscreen, that distance can seem all too small and come as quite a shock.

From the CAT point of view we seem to be dealing with more and more virtual airproxes announced only by TCAS or radar, the pilots never seeing each other. These are what one might term technical airproxes inasmuch as they breach mandatory separation, even though the

aircraft might be miles apart. It is quite amazing sometimes how these unravel, and the number of factors involved. One could question whether we learn anything from an airprox involving two aircraft two or three miles apart – the answer is yes, sometimes. There are breakdowns in communication, compounded by other errors, and we are able on occasions to make recommendations that tighten the system; read that to mean, make it safer.

Always bear in mind that in CAT there has not been a fatal accident to a British registered aircraft for over 25 years. That's a great record: I'd much rather be examining an airprox report than a mid air collision. (Must touch wood!)

When it comes to GA we look at reports from model aircraft through to bizjets. This is where defining an airprox becomes very difficult. A number involve aircraft where one may not see the other, or where sightings come very late. These usually result in an airprox report and I'm not surprised. Can we learn anything from these incidents that are perhaps random in Class G airspace where see and avoid is the key element? Yes I think we can. If it just reminds people to keep a good look out, or that even though there's a lot of airspace and few aircraft relative to the volume, there are places and occasions that concentrate aeroplanes and make mid airs more likely.

So part of our process is about educating people about where these risk factors lie, peppered with constant reminders of vigilance.

As a Board we do not allocate blame and operate under what are colloquially known as the Chatham House rules, which means that we don't talk about our confidential discussions outside of the Airprox Board. This is to encourage people to make reports where they feel they have

been compromised.

So in answer to the question "What is an airprox?" my definition must be, when something happens that causes concern to either or both pilots of aircraft flying in close proximity to each other (or indeed an air traffic controller), then that is likely to result in an airprox report.

However, there are caveats. Filing an airprox should not be used as a weapon and unfortunately we do see this on occasions where a pilot blames air traffic control or an air traffic controller thinks a pilot behaved badly, or indeed pilots take exception to each other's behaviour, cutting up in a circuit, or bad airmanship. Air rage is not acceptable behaviour and using an airprox report as a weapon is unacceptable.

So if you're considering filing an airprox, just think about the rationale behind it: are there lessons to be learned? Was an aircraft's proximity not dangerous, but just a surprise?

Perhaps a bit of advice to the big boys. When you see one of those puddle jumpers in Class D airspace, it may be there legitimately. In VFR conditions your aeroplane will look fairly large and perhaps be slightly more intimidating than his. Please don't assume that all GA pilots don't know where they're going or what they're doing.

Over the last couple of years the number of airprox reports has fallen; in fact quite dramatically if you remove those that involve military aircraft, the MoD having recently introduced an edict of reporting all near misses including those which have gone unreported in years gone by.

Whether this statistic is meaningful and the number of genuine airproxes has fallen, or whether people have become complacent or, worse still, are worried that further action in an enforcement sense will result from an airprox report, is difficult to know, but from a GA perspective I would reinforce the fact that if you are involved in what you feel is an airprox, don't shy away from making a report. I can assure you that no enforcement action will flow from the same. There may be some lessons for us all to learn.. ■



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AOPA involved in more wind farm issues

We are concerned about wind farms that are relatively close to radar-equipped airports, primarily because of a tendency to create protective Transponder Mandatory Zones; these are handicaps to users of aircraft that are not transponder equipped, but following negotiations we are pleased to report that in the case of the Clyde Wind Farm in Scotland the following has been proposed:

- Prior to take-off the pilot should telephone an allocated number to request authorisation to access the TTMZ for a block period.
- Authorisation will be granted for a set period (likely to be between 4-8 hours).
- The proposed TMZ is temporary and will only be in place for 18 months. After this time all restrictions (and the necessity for this procedure) will be lifted.

This seems to be a satisfactory solution to a difficult problem and, subject to approval by the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy, the plan will be implemented. The most important issue is that this would be only a temporary restriction.

AOPA continues to be involved in numerous safety problems for GA created by proposed wind farms. Sites handled recently or on the current list include Caernarfon, Bassington, Peterhead (Hatton), Ashcroft, Gransden Lodge, Manston, Spaldington, Moor Farm (North Yorkshire), Lands End, Derby, Prestwick,



Vincent van Zijst

Liverpool, Bodmin and Eaglescott. In some cases AOPA's involvement has not been on behalf of the aerodromes concerned but on behalf of aggrieved users. – *David Ogilvy*

*The CAA has announced that it will no longer process pre-planning enquiries for

wind turbine developments because 'improved awareness of aviation related issues amongst wind farm developers' mean that its involvement in this voluntary and informal process is no longer required. In practice this will have little effect on the issue. ■

Flights down

The number of flights in UK airspace continued to decline last year, following the trend of 2009. NATS figures show that flights controlled by them were down by 4.3 % during 2010, due to a combination of recession, weather, and a bolshy volcano. Flights during December, were down 6.6 percent compared to December last year, largely due to snow-induced airfield closures.

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The planes in Maine

A good way to kill general aviation is to overtax it, as authorities in the US state of Maine are discovering. The state introduced a sales tax on aircraft under which if you bought a plane in a state with no sales tax and kept it in Maine for more than 20 days, you had to pay five percent of the aircraft's value to Maine's tax collectors. Big sales tax bills went out to people who didn't know the law and brought their planes into Maine for a

service, or on holiday.

Few people now want to base a plane in Maine, which is unfortunate as the state now needs to attract general aviation money. The Navy has closed its airbase at Brunswick, Me, and the state wants to turn it into an aviation business park. The first customer is Kestrel Aircraft, of Farnborough fame, but they are forced to land their Kestrel in Portsmouth, in neighbouring New Hampshire, and drive

80 miles up to Brunswick – otherwise they'd have to fork over five percent of whatever the bureaucrats decide the aircraft is worth.

So now, Maine is moving to repeal the sales tax. AOPA's Director of State Government Affairs Mark Kimberling says: "The repeal of this use tax would provide a real economic boost to Brunswick and communities all across the state by levelling the playing field in attracting new aviation businesses and by welcoming visiting aircraft back into Maine."

What chance that this enlightenment will spread? None. ■

Airbox Aware winners

The names of new AOPA members go into the hat for a monthly draw for an Airbox Aware anti-infringement tool; winner for October was Trix Lummis (pictured) and the November winner was Nigel Harradine. Welcome both, and all new members.

If you're not lucky enough to win an Airbox Aware, it's well worth putting your hand in your pocket for one of these... they're subsidised by NATS and supported by every major pilot group in the country. They're simple to use and could go a long way to helping you avoid an infringement, and all the attendant issues. See www.airboxaware.co



Young pilots' tour of France

Every alternate year the Federation Francaise Aeronautique (FFA) invites a UK Private Pilot holder to participate in their prestigious Young Pilots Tour of France which takes place this year from 17th to 31st July.

Applicants must hold a current full PPL and must have been born between 1st July 1993 and 31st December 1988.

This is a wonderful experience for a young PPL holder, who would be required to provide an aeroplane from his or her club or other source and get to and from the start and finish points at their own expense. However, the successful applicant will have his or her expenses, such as board and lodging, fuel, oil and aviation charges paid during the Tour.

Young UK pilots who are interested in participating should contact AOPA's Pam Campbell at pamelacampbell30@googlemail.com

Work begins on CI Class A redesign

Charles Strasser, Chairman of the AOPA Channel Islands Region, says that progress is being made on the redesign of Channel Islands airspace. It is generally agreed that the Channel Islands Control Zone, probably the largest segment of Class A airspace in Europe, is in need of revision, to redesign and reclassify it to be similar to UK airports which have much larger numbers of movements but which operate safely with Class D.

In response to a request from Charles for an update on progress, Sandy Sawyer, the Jersey Airport Operations Director, says that work has started on the redesign of airspace, and a consultation process will begin once there's something to show. Mr Sawyer adds that the ultimate aim will be a reduction in the amount of Class A airspace that we currently have, but it will depend upon how the MAP, Transition Level, CDAs, SIDs and STARs look once they have been redesigned and approved through the DAP. ■



Log your website details

Have you had a look at AOPA's new website? Mike Cross, Mick Elborn and others have been working hard on the site to make it more informative and functional and are looking at providing a 'members only' section with specialised content. To get that up and running they need you to have website log-ins, and they've arranged a process whereby you can set up your website account, and then they'll email you telling you how to access your account and set up your own password.

Mike Cross says: "The existing database is sadly lacking in e-mail addresses so we need to start collecting information as soon as we can. Mick Elborn has devised a simple form for the website that users can fill in to give us their e-mail address and contact phone number. We'll store that in a database, then link it to their membership records once we go live on the new membership database."

Details and a link to the form are on the front page of the website at www.aopa.co.uk, right at the top of the page. Why not go online now, before it slips your mind, and fill in your details so you can be assured of getting 'members only' information in future?

Apart from signing up for the members only stuff, there's now a huge amount of information on our user-friendly website, and we've got a Wiki where you have add your own information, if the spirit moves you. Have a paddle around in www.aopa.co.uk.

Picture credit

The excellent air-to-air photographs of the Robin EcoFlyer in the last issue of General Aviation came to us courtesy of Flyer magazine, which was not prominently credited in the article. Our apologies for the omission.

