

Aviation unites to attack EASA fees

The entire aviation world has mounted a concerted attack on EASA over its scale of fees and charges, which are characterised as inexplicably high and are acting as a major drag on the aviation industry in Europe.

IAOPA has joined organisations representing every facet of regulated aviation in writing to the Chairman of the EASA Board of Management expressing concern at the damaging effect of EASA's fees. The letter, reproduced here, singles out for special attention the wholly disproportionate charges levied on general aviation and demands that they be reduced through a programme of cost-cutting at EASA.

The text of the letter, addressed to Mike Smethers, Chairman of the EASA Board of Management, has been agreed by organisations as diverse as Airbus, the International Air Transport Association, the Association of European

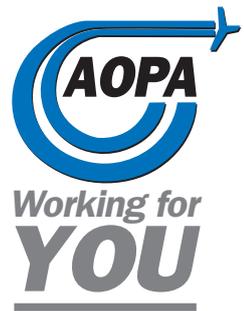
Airlines, Rolls Royce and the European Business Aviation Association as well as IAOPA. It indicates that EASA's overheads are running out of control at a time when economies of scale should be bringing them down and points out that EASA's labour charge – €246.38 per hour – is wholly out of scale with labour costs in the industry and twice as high as those of other aviation regulators. It also calls on Europe to accept more bilateral agreements which mean EASA would not spend money re-certificating equipment which has already been acceptably certificated by third countries.

Martin Robinson, who represents IAOPA on the EASA Advisory Body which agreed the text of the letter, says: "We are particularly gratified that our colleagues in the airline world, in aviation manufacturing and in other areas which have up to now not

identified closely with general aviation are united on this issue. This makes it very difficult for EASA and the European Commission to ignore.

"From GA's standpoint, we have always said that none of EASA's major overheads – big offices, large staffs – would be necessary at all if the organisation existed solely for the regulation of GA, so it is unfair that GA should be forced to pay such significant sums towards those overheads."

The letter, signed by Vincent De Vroey, Chairman of the EASA Advisory Board, reads as follows:



Dear Mr Smethers

"We would like to comment on the proposals for EASA fees & charges for the new EASA remits (operational suitability, operations, flight crew licensing, ATM and aerodromes).

The EAB would like to express its concerns on the extremely high level of EASA fees which seems the result of high overhead costs at EASA. The current EASA hourly rate (€246.38) is well above hourly rates charged within the EU aviation industry (around €100 on average) or hourly rates charged by other Aviation Authorities (for example, the hourly rate for an FAA inspector is \$154 (i.e. nearly half the hourly rate charged by EASA). We therefore believe there is an urgent need to improve EASA's efficiency in particular through reducing its non-safety related overhead costs. In this context, the EAB is concerned on the contribution of the growth in additional administrative staff (e.g. HR, communications, internal audit, finance etc.) to the overhead in EASA, which is disproportionate to the overall size of the agency.

We fail to understand why EASA's hourly rate is not reduced as a result of its expanded scope e.g. we strongly feel it should be possible for EASA to make savings in non-safety related overhead costs as result of economies of scale which should be reflected in a lower hourly rate. The EAB is also disappointed about the lack of progress on imposing meaningful Key Performance Indicators for the different EASA activities. We believe that it is urgent to finalise this work in line with the EAB's longstanding request.

In addition, the EAB stresses the need for more transparency on EASA's cost base in relation to those costs financed through fees and charges versus the activities which should be financed through the EU subsidy. We strongly believe that fees should only relate to actual and proportionate costs of individual certification projects and should not include activities of a more general nature which should be financed through the EU subsidy.

With regard to both the existing and new remits, the EAB feels that there is an urgent need to develop an EASA certification strategy to include the resources needed to fulfill the tasks in the most efficient way. This should include a need to conclude further bilateral aviation safety agreements (BASA) and to expand existing BASAs, so that EASA can rely on the oversight capabilities of foreign Aviation Authorities. This would prevent the need for EASA to build up resources (and associated costs) to re-certify foreign organisations or products.

With regard to the new remits, there is also a need for other organisations (NAAs, Eurocontrol) to reduce their costs and staffing levels for those activities which will be taken over by EASA. This is essential to prevent an increase of total costs charged to the industry as a result of duplication in resources and costs between, in particular, EASA and Eurocontrol.

The EAB strongly feels there is a need for clearer criteria on the amount of hours EASA should spend on the approval of foreign organisations and products. In particular, travel time should not be counted as a chargeable activity. The EAB is concerned that high fees for the approval of foreign organisations (i.e. foreign training organisations and foreign flight simulators) might result in those organisations declining EASA certification, thereby negatively impacting the possibilities of EU aircraft operators to train their crew efficiently in line with EU safety requirements.

Moreover, the EAB is opposed to any fees for Third Country Operator (TCO) approvals which might lead to retaliation towards EU industry. We believe this is, in any case, against the intentions of the EU legislator which did not require EASA to recertify foreign operators.

Last but not least, the EAB would also like to re-iterate its concern on the high level of EASA fees for general aviation which are unaffordable for this kind of activity. We believe that the EASA fees for general aviation should be reduced through a complete review of EASA costs, rules, procedures and structures related to general aviation in order to make the fees more proportionate for those kind activities. However, we disagree with cross-subsidies between different kind of activities since we believe EASA fees should be linked to proportionate costs linked to the actual certification activity."

Ge Vincent De Vroey

Strasser: 207 down, five to go

Carlisle Airport has become the 207th in Britain to join AOPA's 'Strasser Scheme' under which charges are waived in cases of genuine emergency or precautionary landing. This means that after 11 years, only five airfields in the United Kingdom have declined to sign up for the scheme,

for which AOPA's Channel Islands Chairman Charles Strasser was awarded the CAA General Aviation Safety Award in 2010.

Carlisle Airport's manager Andy Judge and AOPA

representative John Linford have worked together with Charles Strasser to iron out any concerns that the Scheme could be used by some pilots as an excuse to avoid legitimate charges at Carlisle. The long track record of the Strasser Scheme demonstrates that it is not a threat to revenues, and that differences of opinion can be arbitrated to the satisfaction of all parties.

Charles Strasser says: "Like some other

non-participating airports, Carlisle had concerns about potential abuse of the scheme by GA pilots. In a lengthy exchange of correspondence with Andy Judge, the Director of the airport, I was further able to appraise him of the true intent of the Strasser Scheme, and how to eliminate rare attempts at abuse. He then readily agreed to Carlisle Airport becoming the 207th UK airport to join the scheme. I would therefore like to express, on behalf of all GA pilots, my thanks to him.

"I hope his example will persuade the directors of the remaining five non-participating airports – Belfast International, Cardiff, Leeds-Bradford, Luton and Manchester – to reconsider their refusal to join the potentially life saving AOPA Strasser Scheme, which has not only the recommendation but the backing of the CAA."

The purpose of the Strasser Scheme is to ensure that if a pilot has a problem, the cost of landing need not enter his head when he is deciding how to deal with it.

Often, the fear of exorbitant landing and handling fees can impinge on a pilot's thinking when he is making possibly life-saving decisions, sometimes in stressful circumstances.

The concession applies to genuine emergencies and precautionary diversions to airfields other than the destination and the planned alternate airport, made by GA pilots of aircraft less than three tonnes, not flying for hire or reward. Wide awareness of the Scheme means not only that pilots in a difficult situation can feel able to use almost any airfield without fear of cost in an emergency, but it also draws attention to the onus which is on all pilots to avoid precautionary weather diversions where possible by good flight planning before take-off, as is also recommended in CAP 667 9.2(c).

The Scheme was born out of a recommendation by the CAA in CAP 667 9.2(c) which 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



Chief executive's diary:

A year of challenges

One of the nice things about Christmas is that I get a lot of books from friends and family who obviously think I don't read enough in my work! Some are books I wanted, others I would not have thought to buy myself – but I do enjoy reading, and this year was a particularly good crop. I have the Steve Jobs book by Walter Isaacson, which tells the story of a remarkable, visionary leader... but the only aviation book in my stocking was *Empire of the Clouds*, which tells the story of what must be considered as this country's Golden Age of aviation. For a small island we have produced some truly amazing flying machines, along with the technology that drove them and the people who developed and flew them. I would recommend it to anyone.

The Eurozone crisis has not been far from the front pages, and with France losing its triple-A rating more concerns are being voiced about the future. Much of this crisis has come about because of poor political leadership, combined with a real lack of understanding. Yet our leaders push on in the blind belief that that what they are doing is right. Any new regulation or change can only be truly effective if there is a well thought-out implementation plan, but I fear that loss of face is more important to a European leader than the impact of their decisions on businesses or society; that is certainly true in aviation regulation. Poor leadership got

Europe in this mess, and now we expect that same poor leadership to get us out of it...

AOPA gets involved in all manner of consultations – but is any of it listened to? So much of what we say seems to be ignored; only when what we say coincides with the regulator's objectives are we listened to. At European level we have a really poor system, in my opinion. All societies need to modernise, and at heart I believe that Europe is important to all our futures. The problem is the lack of proper leadership, which is exacerbated by the 'rules of the club'. So we respond to consultations because we have to try and make our opinions known. It was Gandhi who said: "Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it."

Engaging in the system is important, even when our views fall on deaf ears, as in the case with Italy and its tax crisis. As you can read elsewhere in these pages, Italy is in the absurd position of effectively imposing a tax on visitors. Some of those who would have visited Italy, bringing money into that country, will not now do so, and Italian businesses could lose out as some businessmen effectively boycott the purchase of Italian goods. How then does this tax 'save Italy'?

We have similar problems in the UK. This



year we will see the introduction of VHF fees as part of the new Ofcom requirements under 'Administrative Incentive Pricing', and the Government is committed to extending the spectrum charging to all the other areas. Europe also sees the introduction of Emissions Trading in 2012. We have the introduction of EASA FCL to contend with, along with the Olympics, so there is a lot going on in 2012. Committees are part of the consultation process, and AOPA is involved in many of them. Mark Twain described a committee as 'a group of the unwilling, picked from the unfit, to do the unnecessary.' A damning appraisal, perhaps, but it leads me to ask when the regulators will consider their task of writing new regulation to have been completed, and put the committees to rest. A rhetorical question, I think, because if they ever finish, they have no work. Therefore the machinery of Brussels will continue to churn out new proposals and international AOPA will continue to make the case for GA as best we can.

The UK government has announced its intention to sell off the remaining 49% of the airspace which they hold. AOPA is opposed to this as we don't believe it's in the public interest. It's a short-term windfall. I heard recently that the government has put this proposal on hold for now, but it highlights for me how aviation is seen as a cash cow. When you look at HS2 and you examine the environmental hypocrisy of the government you have to ask yourself how the public can possibly fall for it.

As the government increases costs, so

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.”

Having made the recommendation, however, the CAA did nothing to make it happen, so after discussions in an AOPA Board meeting, Charles Strasser – Chairman of the Channel Islands Region of AOPA – took it upon himself to set up a scheme to which all airports could subscribe.

Right: Carlisle ‘LakeDistrict’ airport, owned by Eddie Stobart, joins the Strasser Scheme



The scheme, which obviously had to apply to both AOPA members and non-members alike, came to bear his name.

Many civil airports, and all MoD airports, quickly signed up to the Strasser Scheme, but some civil airports harboured fears that the Scheme could be used by

pilots who wished to avoid legitimate charges. Experience of the Scheme, however, has shown that this is not the case. Apart from setting up the Scheme, Charles Strasser has devoted some time to arbitrating in those rare cases where pilots and airfields disagree, and the outcome

has usually been amicable. The fact that avoidance of fees was not a problem induced more and more airfields to come on board; Biggin Hill joined last year, and now only five holdouts remain. Heathrow, Gatwick and London City have not been approached to join. Charles Strasser has now once again written to this tiny minority of holdouts asking them to reconsider their positions.

The Scheme won for Charles Strasser the CAA's General Aviation Safety Award in 2010. ■

activity will be affected. Fewer PPLs are being issued today than 10 years ago and the five-year renewal of PPLs is less than half of those first issued. With fewer people to share the costs, the higher the individual cost becomes – a spiral of descent. I am an optimist at heart and I believe that as the world economy returns to an even keel, and if ICAO projections for future pilot requirements is correct, we will eventually see an upturn in activity. I passionately believe that there is nothing like the thrill of flying, or the individual sense of achievement that one gets from successfully piloting an aircraft. So AOPA will continue, with your support, to make the case for GA now and in the future.

Things are usually quiet over Christmas, but back on November 9th to 11th GAMA held its first ever board meeting outside the USA in Bordeaux. As an invited speaker I was able to present an overview of many of the issues facing European GA. It was a unique opportunity, as other speakers included Patrick Gandil, Director General of the DGAC in France, Matthew Baldwin, head of the EC's transport department, and Patrick Goudou, head of EASA. AOPA US and IAOPA President Craig Fuller were also in attendance – AOPA US and GAMA have a close working relationship. It was an excellent networking opportunity and I must thank Pete Bunce and Brian Davy for their kind invitation and hospitality. November 15th we had an ASICG meeting – this is the Airspace Safety Initiative Coordinators Group, which looks at risks associated with the use of the UK's airspace, from airprox data to wind turbines. There was some discussion about future electronic conspicuity

for GA and the impact on ATSOCAS provision where Military ATSUs are closed, and poor quality RT. AOPA is concerned about delayed clearances – or denied clearances – particularly where new class D airspace is imposed, as at Norwich. If you are denied a clearance we want to hear from you, as we need to monitor trends in this area.

GACC, the General Aviation Consultative Committee, discussed the CAA safety plan, Olympics airspace, the Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) developments, and again, wind turbines. IMHO this group is too big, and in the time available it cannot discuss in detail some of the issues that affect our members. AOPA would like to see some reform; perhaps the GACC could have smaller meetings with one plenary session. However, others on the GACC have objected to this idea.

From November 19th to 22nd I was in Lebanon and Cyprus following up on the work that was started earlier in the year with AOPA Lebanon, although the primary aim was to meet the management at Larnaca airport to discuss the handling fees that apply to GA. We found that the airport management were very welcoming and receptive to our views regarding the costs incurred by our members. The airport is beginning a review of handling fees and will keep us informed. All we need to do now is to encourage the Cypriot CAA to allow Lebanese pilots to land in Larnaca.

On December 1st we had ACEP, the CAAs education and communication committee. Again it involves a large number of groups. It links into the Airspace & Safety

Initiative programme – if you have not visited the ASI website for a while, do so. On December 8th I was in Cologne for the EASA Advisory Body, where the main discussion is the amended scale of fees and charges, some of the change in relation to the extension of EASA's remit in to ATM and aerodromes. We remain concerned also about slow progress towards improved rulemaking. I highlighted the recent Part M review as welcomed but necessary because of the poor way Part M was constructed. I asked that this example be used in discussions with the Management Board. EASA has to succeed but it must be fit for purpose – our purpose, not some obscure political objective.

On January 10th we had a meeting of the Airspace Infringement Working Group. The news is good; there's been a 60% reduction of higher-risk infringements, but a 10% increase in overall infringements. Again, this group dovetails into the work of the above-mentioned ASICG, ACEP and GACC. On January 12th I was at the CAA's Safety regulation Group Finance Advisory Committee. I'm in no doubt that the CAA is aware of the financial problems facing GA and the burden that their fees impose on small business. There is a real attempt to look at how the CAA can modernise its systems and internal procedures, and by taking a more risk-based approach to regulation it is hoped that future efficiencies will have an impact on CAA costs and charges. We will continue to challenge the CAA to do more but I really feel we have turned a corner with them.

Martin Robinson

Whither the IMC rating?

Members have been seeking information from AOPA and the CAA on the future of the IMC Rating. **Nick Wilcock** provides an update.

There are basically three areas of concern:

1. Is there a deadline by which time I need to have completed my IMC Rating training and testing?

The answer to this 'No!' Our CAA friend Cliff Whittaker has stated: "It will be possible to add or renew an IMC rating on a UK non-JAR/non-EASA licence into the future, but within a few years those licences will no longer be valid for EASA aircraft". The CAA website already indicates that those of you who do not hold a 'UK non-JAR/non-EASA' licence will shortly be able

to apply for a supplementary United Kingdom licence, within which your new IMC Rating may be included. However, under current EASA proposals, as Cliff has said, within a few years the IMC Rating may not (unless 'grandfathered') be valid for use on EASA aircraft.

2. Will I be able to 'grandfather' my existing IMC Rating?

EASA admits that it cannot remove any existing privileges from those so qualified. So the likely effect of this is that anyone who 'holds or has held IMC Rating privileges' before a certain date will be able to have these privileges included in an EASA pilot licence, probably as an 'Instrument Rating (Restricted UK)' which, despite the description (and anything else you might have read elsewhere), will be identical to the existing IMC Rating. This will be valid on both EASA and non-EASA aircraft. But as yet, neither we nor the CAA know this date. The CAA has written to EASA seeking clarification, but must await the outcome of the Agency's discussions with the European Commission before it can commit further. If, despite further chasing up, EASA fails to respond, there will come a point when the Authority will be obliged to declare at least an interim position. However, for them to do so prematurely poses clear risk.

3. What will happen to the IMC Rating under EASA?

The €64,000 question! You may be aware that EASA published its *Notice of Proposed Amendment 2011-16 'Qualifications for flying in Instrument Meteorological Conditions'* for consultation at the end of last year. Regrettably, despite earlier assurances, this NPA failed to include a suitable proposal for the future of the IMC Rating. Consultation responses have therefore been raised accordingly. Members will already have noted the AOPA

(UK) response on this website; however, following our initiative, the CAA has responded in a similar vein:

Comment:

JAR-FCL 1.017 allowed for national ratings not included in JAR-FCL to be added to JAR-FCL licences and used in the airspace of those countries only, as follows:
JAR-FCL 1.017 Authorisations/Ratings for special purposes

Authorisations/Ratings for special purposes associated with a licence (e.g. IMC flying, towing, aerobatics, dropping of parachutists, etc.) may be established with the Authority in accordance with the requirements of that JAA Member State for use solely within that Member State's airspace. The use of such an authorisation/rating in another JAA member State's airspace requires the prior agreement of the State(s) visited, except where a bilateral agreement exists.

Retaining a similar requirement in Part-FCL would satisfy the needs of UK pilots wishing to gain the UK IMC Rating in the future.

Justification:

It is noted that Article 4 of the Aircrew Regulation was amended at the EASA Committee to make provision for member states to allow pilots to exercise limited privileges within the airspace of the

member state concerned before qualifying for a LAPL.

The UK IMC Rating may be regarded as an interim step towards obtaining the EIR or the modular IR. It is proposed therefore that by analogy a similar provision may be made for national ratings for flight under IFR to be exercised within the airspace of the relevant country only.

Proposed Text:

FCL.600 IR - General

- (a) Except as provided in FCL.600(b) and FCL.825, operations under IFR of an aeroplane, helicopter, airship or powered-lift aircraft shall only be conducted by holders of a PPL, CPL, MPL and ATPL with an appropriate to the category or aircraft or when undergoing skill testing or dual instruction.
- (b) In member states where national legislation permits flight in accordance with IFR under specified circumstances, the holder of a pilot licence may fly under IFR in the airspace of that member state only, provided that the pilot holds the national qualification of that member state appropriate to the circumstances of the flight.

Members should note that AOPA and other aviation organisations have been working closely with the CAA to formulate a largely coordinated UK response to EASA concerning the future of the UK IMC Rating. We will bring you further news when it becomes available. ■



Regional airlines back GA

Excellent news from Cologne, where the regional airlines have unequivocally come round to the view that it's not in their interests for EASA to strangle GA with charges. It's taken us years of work to get this point, and we're grateful to the European Regions Airline Association for stating clearly that EASA's proposed charges would have serious implications for airlines which rely on GA to provide the pilots of the future.

It may seem obvious to us, but in Britain it is not accepted that GA feeds pilots to the airlines. In its last Strategic Review, the CAA stated that it does not – but that's because they were following the British Airways line, which is that BA only poaches pilots from other airlines so it considers GA to be an irrelevance. The regional airlines from which BA takes its pilots have a different view, and now they are setting it out clearly.

At the December meeting of the EASA Advisory Body I made the point yet again that GA cannot afford EASA's charges, which are set at €246.38 an hour for any work they do. EASA's massive overheads, big offices and crowds of staff are not there for GA, but for the airlines. We don't need highly-paid Airbus engineers overseeing PA28s. It is illogical that GA should pay





Buying a plane? Caveat emptor

Some AOPA members encounter problems which might have been identified by a rigorous pre-purchase inspection. By George Done

A pre-purchase inspection of an aircraft that you are seriously considering buying can be a valuable tool in negotiation with the owner. AOPA has a shortlist of engineers who are willing to survey an aircraft prior to purchase, but for geographic location reasons it may be more convenient to approach a local maintenance organisation and ask if any of

their employees might be willing to assist. There is normally a going rate per hour plus expenses. A licensed engineer is not essential, as many unlicensed engineers employed in a maintenance organisation have a wealth of experience. You might also consider approaching local groups operating an aircraft similar to one you are interested in, as such a group usually has

what's wrongly deemed to be 'its fair share' of EASA overheads.

We are grateful to the ERAA's Director General Mike Ambrose for setting it out clearly that not only are we right, but the size of EASA's fees risks strangling the GA industry and will adversely affect the airlines. Mike has been running the ERAA for 25 years and knows the score; over the last ten years he and I have had many discussions on this issue. He is telling the EASA Board of Management that GA may be 'strangled out of existence if EASA persists in basing its charges for GA at current levels.' He goes on to say that this would have serious implications for many airlines 'as GA frequently provides the seedlings from which air transport pilots grow'. Oversight of GA, he says, is more relative to car technology than to 'the sophistication, experience and skillset required for oversight and regulation of, say, 777s'. He concludes: 'Therefore a variation in the applied EASA rate might be justifiable for GA'.

When someone of Mike's stature makes such an unequivocal case it's hard for EASA to ignore it. It's very heartening to know we're on the same side on this one, and we hope to make good progress in 2012. – *Martin Robinson* ■

Left: British Airways only poaches pilots from other airlines so it considers GA to be an irrelevance

a co-owner who looks after the engineering side, and they are often quite knowledgeable. Different aircraft types suffer from known problems particular to that type. Owner club websites are also a good source of information.

The aircraft and engine logbooks (preferably going back to the date of manufacture) need to be made available to your engineer because he will be able to tell you a lot about the aircraft simply from its recorded history. He will also examine the logbooks to check that all the correct maintenance has been properly carried out, and that all the ADs and SBs (Airworthiness Directives and Service Bulletins) have been attended to. If the aircraft has flown much less than 100 hours per year for considerable periods in the last few years, then beware of engine corrosion problems. Many owners do not take kindly to their aircraft being dismantled in order for a third party to investigate its airworthiness, and in this case an inspection relies mainly on what can be viewed externally or seen via inspection panels. But, if the underside of the aircraft is dirty or muddy, beware of superficial corrosion of the skins (assuming an aluminium structure) indicated by little bubbles under the paint. Check the state of the interior and the avionics fit, because this has an impact on the value, as does the total hours on the airframe and particularly the engine. Bear in mind that bringing an engine back to zero hours, together with renovating all the ancillaries may set you back £15,000 plus or minus depending on type. Different engines have differing TBOs, so an aircraft with an engine coming up to the end of its TBO life, or calendar life if that is closer, is worth that much less than one with a brand new engine. A new paint job will cost you £6,000 or more.

A typical pre-purchase inspection will cost something of the order of £250 or more, and will vary according to factors such as depth of inspection required, selling price and complexity of the aircraft. Twin-engine aircraft, and aircraft with retractable gear, de-icing, variable pitch propeller etc. will inevitably cost more. You should expect to cover the engineer's expenses, typically travel and subsistence. Remember the basic price quoted above is roughly equivalent to a 50-hour check inspection – the pre-purchase inspection at this level cannot be expected to uncover problems that may only come to light at an annual check, which is much deeper than a 50-hour. If asked, your engineer may (or may choose not to) offer a valuation – do not expect one in writing, though. He may also recommend that you avoid purchasing the aircraft altogether (again, not in writing) and in this case you would be wise to heed his advice, even though that advice has cost you money. ■



Read the small print

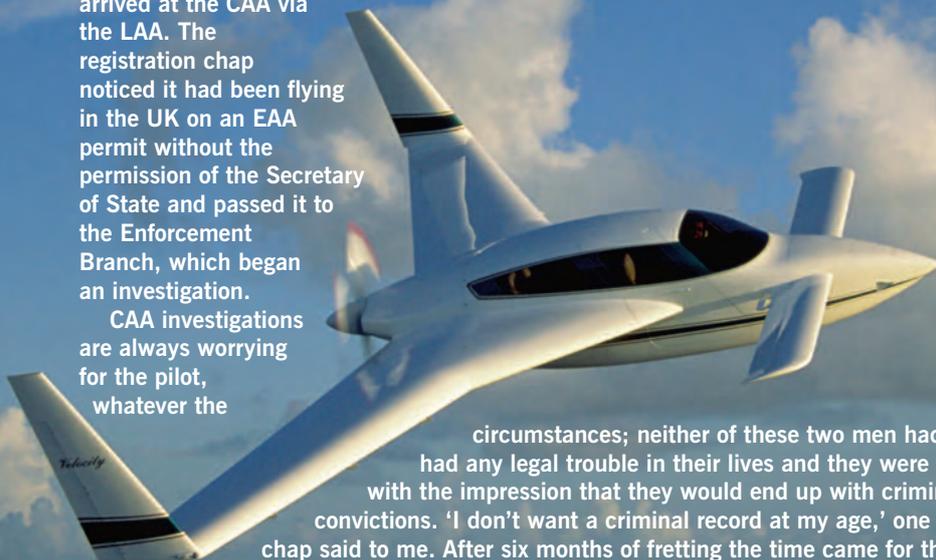
We've had a satisfactory resolution to an unusual legal issue from which a number of lessons may be learned – not least, “read and understand the small print before you sign anything”. Two AOPA members, gentlemen of mature years, were building a Velocity when they decided to seek some help, boxed it up and took it to the factory in Florida. The build was completed in the US and the aircraft put on the N-register. These intrepid fellows flew it home to Britain themselves, after which they displayed it at air shows. They then decided to put it on the G-register and the application duly arrived at the CAA via the LAA. The registration chap noticed it had been flying in the UK on an EAA permit without the permission of the Secretary of State and passed it to the Enforcement Branch, which began an investigation.

CAA investigations are always worrying for the pilot, whatever the

circumstances; neither of these two men had had any legal trouble in their lives and they were left with the impression that they would end up with criminal convictions. ‘I don't want a criminal record at my age,’ one chap said to me. After six months of fretting the time came for their formal interviews, which were held here in the AOPA offices in Victoria. I coached them beforehand and sat in on the interviews.

In essence the defence was that they were bang to rights but didn't realise they'd broken the law. The CAA pointed out that they had signed documents which clearly stated the EAA permit was only valid in the US. Yes, but anyone can make a mistake – a CAA examiner had issued this aircraft with a display authorisation, so the Authority had effectively made the same mistake itself.

We've got notification now that the CAA will deal with this matter by way of a caution. This sensible and pragmatic outcome means there will be no prosecution. They accept that these chaps made an honest mistake, that it's a one-off, and that they were caught while trying to do the right thing – get the plane on the G-register. The problem could have been avoided had the pilots genuinely understood what the documents they had signed were actually saying. Whatever document you're signing, in whatever walk of life, make sure you know what you're committing to. – *Martin Robinson*



RIN marks your Olympic card

The CAA and the Royal Institute of Navigation are holding a joint briefing on the Olympic airspace structure in London on Saturday March 10th so if you have any questions or concerns, that's the place to get answers.

The briefing, at the Royal Geographical Society in Kensington, is free, and features presentations and question-and-answer sessions which will give you the most up to date information on how to use Atlas Control, the ATC unit that will provide a service in the restricted zone, now designated R112; the options available for filing flight plans to get access to the R112; how airfields can apply for and use exemptions; and the interception procedures planned to be used by MoD aircraft.

There will also be a workshop on navigation techniques with Mark Batlin, a Fellow of the RIN and a former RAF navigator. The CAA hopes to have on sale the new southern England 1:500,000 chart; they've announced their intention of giving away an Olympics airspace chart with every half mil sold.

Pre-registration is necessary via Olympics@rin.org.uk.

AOPA is a sponsor of this event and a report will appear in the next issue of this magazine.

CAA quietly changes IR rules

The CAA has made an unheralded change to the rules on instrument flying currency which has had a serious effect on military pilots who believed their service instrument renewals counted for the civilian equivalent, only to discover they are no longer deemed to have civil IRs and cannot take up employment with airlines.



The situation had previously been that a military pilot with a civil IR could count his military IR check as a civilian equivalent. This was official CAA advice, clear and well understood. In the 2010 issue of LASORS the CAA quietly changed that so that military IR checks

effectively had no validity, and they made this retrospective. If they had been obtained more than seven years ago the holders found they had to do all the theory exams again, as well as the skills test.

As a result, pilots leaving the military now are finding that having been accepted for civil jobs at interview they are unable to take them up because they don't have a valid IR and have to go back to school and get one.

The old rules were confirmed in the 2008 LASORS, but the change was not included in the official 'list of changes from 2008', which might at least have provided some warning. The MoD's legal department says the decision could

legitimately be challenged on the grounds of procedural fairness but they won't get involved because only ex-MoD staff are affected, and a judicial review is beyond the pockets of the victims.

This affects not just the military. Holders of non-UK IRs who believed their own ICAO-compliant IR renewals counted for the UK equivalent are finding they don't. A Cathay Pacific 747 captain who has been flying into Heathrow for decades finds that if he wants a job in the UK, he has to go back to school because he hasn't got an IR – and nobody told him.

The CAA has declined to revisit the change on the grounds that as it has already refused to accommodate some ex-service pilots, it would be unfair to do the right thing now. It's been suggested that the only recourse the military men will have is a judicial review, which they cannot afford. ■

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AOPA and aerodromes today

by David Ogilvy

AOPA has been involved in protection of aerodromes for many years, but the work started in earnest in 1987 when Toyota applied to Derby City Council to build a car factory on Burnaston. There were many objections from aviation interests and Toyota offered to move to another, nearby, piece of ground. However, the Council, as owners of the land, wished to close the airfield and told the applicants to build on it – or go away. The situation was compounded by political issues with the intervention of Edwina Currie MP who, after initial promises, announced that there were enough flying sites and there was no need for a replacement.



Burnaston was closed, which I found most objectionable, as for 14 years I had been involved with the organisation that operated it and which held the licence. This persuaded me to convince my then AOPA colleagues that, in the interests of GA's future health, the Association should take the lead in saving flying sites. This developed into a plan to ensure that there would be at least one GA aerodrome within reasonable reach of every centre of population, commerce, industry or tourism.

Fairly early in the development of a sustainable work programme, my colleague, Jack Wells, then a Director and now a well-deserving vice-president, agreed that the overall problem called for the broadest possible support from the GA movement as a whole. So we sowed seeds further afield and launched the General Aviation Awareness Campaign, which all relevant organisations joined. Initially we obtained very helpful sponsorship from Total and when this expired we received financial help from Air BP. Understandably

they were unable to be involved in a 'campaign' so by mutual agreement we placed the work on a more permanent basis and converted to the General Aviation Awareness Council. The early support from two leading companies with commercial interests in the GA world enabled us to gain a strong footing in wider circles. Since the sponsorship ended the Council has operated successfully on income from subscriptions and from donations.

From the start the GAAC was a broad church, with Directors and Working Group members from all the significant GA bodies, including the then Popular Flying Association (now the Light Aircraft Association), the British Gliding Association, the British Microlight Aircraft Association, the (then) General Aviation Manufacturers and Traders Association and many others.

However, eventually, a change seemed advisable. All administration had been carried out from the AOPA office and meetings were held in the Association's rather cramped accommodation. This led, wrongly but understandably, to some people feeling that AOPA was using this as an opportunity for self-promotion. As a result, a physical move was made to the Royal Aeronautical Society, which removed any political problem and provided more space for gatherings. Since then the Council has continued to be a force in the land and the change led to a sensible division of responsibilities: the GAAC would handle matters of national planning and related policy, while AOPA would continue to deal with issues concerning individual flying sites. In principle, that split continues today and seems to make long-term sense.

Whilst the unhappy state of the national economy has led to fewer applications for new or expanded flying sites, the overall call to AOPA for help has changed but has not decreased. Problems continue relating to a wide range of issues including the all-important 28-day rule, Lawful Development Certificates, objections from neighbours, rights of access, delicensing, safeguarding, operating practices and even drainage.

By far the most active issue concerns wind farms and this is destined to escalate. Of the many site problems put to AOPA within the past two years, 48 have related to wind turbines. A newer situation currently brewing is the suitability of runways as bases for solar panels and already several such proposals have come AOPA's way. This may become a more critical problem than that of wind turbines, as ground occupied by panels cannot be used for flying. We are watching this closely.

The end of another calendar year seems to be an appropriate time to look back and assess AOPA's participation in the provision of aerodromes and airstrips for GA. As at 5th January 2012 your Association has been involved with 750 planning and/or operational issues relating to UK flying sites. In many cases it is impossible to assess the extent of our influence in the decision-making process and there are times when it all feels very frustrating, especially when many pilots and owners seem relatively disinterested in the overall situation – unless their own home bases are openly threatened. Perhaps we have failed to communicate sufficiently effectively that in itself an aerodrome is of relatively little value; only a geographically broad spread of flying sites readily available for all users can make GA a practical reality. That is one of the main aims of AOPA's course of action.

Interestingly – and importantly – the overall situation on a worldwide basis has been highlighted in the 50th anniversary issue of the IAOPA Bulletin. The International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations represent more than 450,000 individuals in 69 States and is by far the world's largest pilot representative organisation. This Bulletin contains a list of the many problems and other issues affecting GA and here I quote the end piece:

'The final and perhaps the most significant threat is the slow and apparently inexorable disappearance of general aviation aerodromes. Land developers and environmentalists act from very powerful political bases, making them formidable foes. Unfortunately they frequently fail to understand and consider the economic and social considerations made by general aviation.' Well said, IAOPA. I will say no more. ■

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New risk to flight in Italy

Italy has introduced a new 'luxury tax' on private aircraft which will have a serious impact on the aviation industry and is likely to cost the country more than it brings in in revenue. The new tax will be levied on a sliding scale from €1.5 per kilogram per year for aircraft under 1,000 kgs to €7.55 per kg for aircraft over 10,000 kg, with helicopters paying double. While the tax will further depress aircraft ownership in Italy, it could affect every pilot in Europe because it applies to any aircraft, of any nationality, which remains on Italian territory for 48 hours or more. Not only does that make visiting Italy expensive, but even passing through the country becomes risky. A weather delay, a mechanical problem, or industrial action by ATC could land the transiting pilot with a tax bill running into thousands of euros.

Massimo Levy of AOPA Italy says: "It looks like they really want to put an end to GA in this country. Can you imagine an English tourist with a private plane being obliged to pay €3,500 'luxury tax' at the end of his long weekend in Italy? Or the American businessman arriving with his Citation remaining for more than two days?

"What will happen now to Italian GA? I have no idea. It looks like we really might have

reached the end of the road."

AOPA Italy has spoken with a number of politicians making it clear that while aircraft owners should contribute at what is seen to be a time of national emergency, the levels of tax were so excessive that they would cripple the industry and therefore produce less revenue than they would if they were set at more sensible levels. Political promises of alleviation have come to nothing.

The new taxes, imposed under a decree named 'Save Italy' which also raises the pension age by five years, hit almost everything but are particularly heavy on items such as cars over 250 hp, boats more than 10 metres long, and all aircraft. While boats and cars enjoy a discount on



the basis of the age – after 20 years a boat pays only 50% of the tax and a car does not pay at all – aircraft pay the full amount indefinitely.

Airlines, charter and aerial work operators are exempt from the tax, as are government, police and military aircraft. Others must pay annually:

Up to 1,000 kg MTOW	€1.50 per kg
Up to 2,000 kg MTOW	€2.50 per kg
Up to 4,000 kg MTOW	€4.25 per kg
Up to 6,000 kg MTOW	€5.75 per kg
Up to 8,000 kg MTOW	€6.65 per kg
Up to 10,000 kg MTOW	€7.10 per kg
Over 10,000 kg MTOW	€7.55 per kg

Helicopters must conform to this weight scale but pay double the amounts. Gliders, motorgliders, gyroplanes and balloons will pay a fixed €450 per year.

The application of these tax rates to foreign aircraft will discourage aerial tourism, but Massimo Levy wonders whether anyone will really notice. "Italy already extends poor hospitality to foreign GA airplanes, with all its airspace and airport regulations and charges, so possibly no-one will notice that the trade has all gone, unless something happens like a foreigner refusing to pay and the authorities impounding an aircraft. Something like this would make a lot of bad publicity to the country." ■

If you stay in Italy for more than 48 hours you risk having to pay thousands of euros in tax

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TopNav and rally flying workshop

Has it crossed your mind to enter TopNav, or an air rally? If so, there's a workshop at Booker on Saturday February 18th which you can go to to learn how to get more out of your flying, and be a better pilot.

Anyone who has gained a PPL has risen to the challenge of mastering a new skill in a third dimension and succeeded, so if the prospect of another bacon buttie at the airfield and a few circuits or a quick tour of the local area with family or friends doesn't hold the thrill it once did. So how about some Precision Flying?



At first glance that sounds rather daunting, but this workshop is designed to dispel the myths surrounding Precision Flying. Members of the Royal Institute of Navigation (RIN) and the British Rally Flying Club (BRFC)/British Precision Pilots' Association (BPPA) will talk through the principles behind flying rally flying in general and TopNav in particular, with the aim of encouraging members of all levels of experience to give it a go.

RIN runs the annual general aviation competition TopNav in two locations –



TopNav North at Retford, and TopNav South at White Waltham – and Mark Batin will be covering all aspects of how to prepare for and fly the competition. He will be giving helpful tips on how to make the most of the experience and encouraging workshop attendees to take part this year.

The BRFC is the organisation that looks after the organisation of UK rally and precision flying competitions and promotes the sport at a UK level, while members of the BPPA are the ones who compete in international events. BPPA members Rhona Hodson and Celeste Blois will be

giving an insight into the roles of pilot and crew in the different events from their own experiences with video clips from past competitions at home and abroad.

The format for these events is very different to that of the Dawn to Dusk or the British Women Pilots' Association's (BWPA) Chairwoman's Challenge. So if neither of these captures your imagination but you would like to try something new, then this is the seminar for you.

Coffee will be available on arrival and a sandwich lunch will be provided, included in the £15 booking cost. It is expected the day will finish about 15.30. The workshop is at Booker TA Drill Hall, Youens House, Old Horns Lane, Booker, Marlow SL7 3DU – a short walk from Booker Airfield for those wishing to fly in. 10:00 for 10:30.

To book a place, send a cheque for £15 per person (payable to BWPA), your contact details, email address and any dietary requirements to: TopNav & Rally Flying Workshop, Albyn's Hall, Albyn's Lane, Stapleford Tawney, Essex, RM4 1RS

Bookings received by February 11th will be confirmed and directions sent out by email. For late bookings please email info@bwpa.co.uk – *Caroline Gough-Cooper*

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Helping Lebanon get on its feet

IAOPA is working to open up the outside world to general aviation in Lebanon, where the inability to cross international borders means GA is dying on its feet. Members of AOPA Lebanon cannot fly north through Syria or south through Israel – the only way out is via Cyprus, 120 miles away across the Mediterranean. But Cyprus imposes such high costs and inordinate security restrictions on Lebanese pilots that it is proving impossible for them to use the island's two airports, Paphos and Larnaca.

In November Martin Robinson, in his capacity as Senior Vice President of IAOPA, flew to Cyprus with AOPA Lebanon's Hadi and Haytham Azhari with the dual purpose of persuading the airport

to revisit its handling charges – a piston single from Lebanon faces fees of €500 – and of talking to the government about easing restrictions on Lebanese pilots, which are not reciprocated; a Cypriot pilot may fly to Beirut with little hindrance.

On the subject of excessive handling charges, some progress was made. Larnaca airport, now privatised, has only two handling agents, whereas IAOPA is pressing the European Commission to suggest a minimum of four to ensure genuine competition. Thanks to Yiouli Kalafati of AOPA Greece, Martin Robinson was able to show the airport authorities contracts held by the same two handling agents on islands in the Aegean, where handling charges were capped at €20 for aircraft under three tonnes. Martin says: "Sometimes it's helpful to explain in plain language that GA doesn't need the services, doesn't need the airstairs, the catering, the push-backs, the baggage handling, that the airlines pay for through their handling fees. Like other airports across Europe, Larnaca is keen to encourage any bit of traffic it can get. The managers were very interested in the effect handling charges have, and I think genuinely receptive to arguments for significant reductions."

In meetings with government officials the economic value of general aviation was explained. Martin says: "We spoke of the economic multipliers and their effect on the hotel, restaurant, tourist and other trades, and again, I think people were receptive to our arguments. From the security standpoint, it would be a positive move for a system of pre-clearances to be established, where pilots vetted through AOPA Lebanon could come and go without excessive demands."

Without a positive response from Cyprus, GA in Lebanon risks being snuffed out. Pilots are restricted to flying up and down their own coast from Beirut, and activity, already small, is falling. ■

'Fly a controller'

AOPA in the Channel Islands has begun a programme under which the islands' air traffic controllers are taking experience flights in light aircraft, and it is having positive results. Relations between GA and ATC have been strained in recent times, and open hostilities broke out over complex requirements for PPR which deterred visitors to the islands last year. The formation of an ATC-GA working group, with regular consultation meetings, should help prevent future problems.



Eleven AOPA members (with eleven aircraft) have volunteered to fly controllers on all three islands with airfields – Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney (above). The controllers, including trainees, have enthusiastically taken up the offer, and as a result relations between ATC and GA have improved immensely. Feedback from controllers has been entirely positive.

Replying to a message of thanks from Jersey ATC, one of the AOPA volunteers, Cirrus pilot Nick Carter, wrote: "The best thing for me was that ATCO's got to actually fly an aircraft and see what it is like up there. I was really surprised that it is not part of their training to actually fly, and that one of my passengers had never been up in a light aircraft.

"I think that the exercise has been great for the ATCO and hope we can all work together to increase GA in Jersey. What came across was that none of the four ATCOs were anti-GA at all; they really saw the benefits of GA to the island. They asked if I had any gripes with ATC, and really I could not come up with anything currently.

"I just want us to work together to ensure my self and family have as safe as possible transit to and from the islands. I hope that this exercise helps get more airport staff into the air and get them to take their PPLs – maybe they could all club together and buy an aircraft."

Participating volunteers in the AOPA scheme are Nick Carter, Charles Strasser, David Jandron, Gregory Guida, Jonathan Gready, Michael Gould, Mike Liston, Peter Paxton, Simon Harman, Richard Hawkin and Roger Dadd.

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