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Chairman's message

Coalitions and partnerships

All of us with a stake in general aviation will be considering, if they have not done so already, how GA is likely to be affected in the future by the newly formed coalition government. GA is very much a minority component within the overall transport scene, and it will be difficult to make our voice heard effectively by the new regime. We can see some of the trends that may affect us in the long term, such as the heightened role of the green agenda which is worrisome because of the simplistic view of GA held, if held at all, by some lobby groups and/or people with influence. Consider the cancellation of the third runway at Heathrow. Whilst this would possibly have affected GA adversely by creating more controlled airspace where there is already little enough, the motivation for the proposal is based on business need – no third runway would have been proposed unless there had been a good case to be made with investors foreseeing a business opportunity. Although this throws up a bit of a conundrum for GA with pros and cons, the one thing we know for sure is that, if commercial air transport thrives, then GA does so as well.



AOPA will be using all available channels of communication to underline and re-establish where necessary the role of GA within not only the UK community, but Europe too. One of the aims of the EC is to expand the internal market, to which GA can contribute in a big way, as happens in the USA. We have to prove that GA has a sustainable future and provides value to the community at large. This is where IAOPA Europe provides an important contribution through its engagement at European level in major organisations such as EASA, Eurocontrol and the European Parliament through our MEPs. In this context, it is worth looking at IAOPA Europe's internal processes – the 23 affiliate country AOPAs that form the European region work almost exactly like a coalition government, if it is to be successful beyond the short term. Each country has its own agenda and special issues, but only those that are of common interest across the board and will carry members' agreement are pursued further on a European basis. The same principle applies at the IAOPA World Assembly when agreeing resolutions.

Although IAOPA Europe has some way to go to achieve the same level of membership and political muscle as AOPA US, the largest country affiliate within IAOPA, those AOPA members who have signed up to receiving the IAOPA Europe e-newsletter (www.iaopa.eu) will have seen that IAOPA has provided additional funding to engage full-time lobbyists to work in Brussels and elsewhere to make joint representations together with the European Business Aircraft Association and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association on matters of mutual interest, so this is a highly significant step in the same direction. The decision was announced at the IAOPA Europe Regional meeting held recently in Friedrichshafen on the occasion of the AERO-2010 general aviation exhibition. It almost goes without saying that AOPA US, which has provided the bulk of the lobbying funds, is extremely aware of the possibility of regulatory 'diseases' originating in Europe crossing the Atlantic for the attention of the FAA.

Partnerships are somewhat different from coalitions, but AOPA UK is always amenable to such relationships with our colleague associations where there is a common interest. Indeed, it could be said that we maintain a partnership with our own CAA because, whilst we can, and will when necessary, be critical of unwelcome and ill-considered decisions affecting GA, it is also true to say that we work constructively with many individuals employed by the CAA. We look forward to doing the same with the newly appointed Head of the Safety Regulation Group, Gretchen Burrett, whom we wish every success in this extremely challenging position. Who would have expected volcanic ash to intrude on the scene so early on one's period of responsibility?

Whether it's a partnership or involvement in international activities, neither can happen without the funds that give us the ability to do the work involved, so please continue with your subscriptions and encourage non-members to join up and contribute to the strong and stable (to borrow a current popular phrase) base from which we can operate.

George Done