

General Aviation

October 2008

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Published by: Richmond Aviation,
The Studio, Kettys Close, Withiel, Bodmin,
Cornwall PL30 5NR. Tel: 01208 832975.
Fax: 01208 832995

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Advertising Director, 11, Hollyhedge Road,
Cobham, Surrey KT11 3DQ. Telephone
01932 868516 and 07951 572301.

Design: David Tarbutt
Printing: Holbrooks Printers Ltd

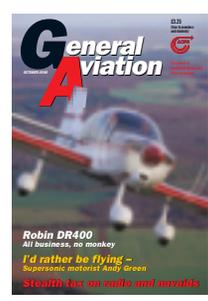
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Material for consideration for the December issue of *General Aviation* should be received by 1st November, 2008

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Published by AOPA, which is a member of the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations.

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Front cover:
Robin
Photo: Keith Wilson/
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Chairman's message

One voice for GA

Readers may have noticed that the August issue of *General Aviation* devoted no less than nine pages to covering the 24th IAOPA World Assembly that took place in Athens in July. This underlines the importance we attach to the overarching international body that comprises 66 country AOPAs, and its role in achieving the best possible political and regulatory climate in which GA can operate. The value of presenting a case through a single and powerful voice on behalf of general aviation at the highest possible level worldwide cannot be underestimated. The "voice" speaks to ICAO, governments and agencies, and service providers through the authority of resolutions, obtained by coordinating views and crystallising responses from the country delegates attending the World Assembly. Such resolutions from the 24th Assembly included the designation and use of airspace, aerodrome charges, mandatory handling charges, realistic alternatives to installed ELTs as required by ICAO, whilst topics such as taxation for environmental reasons, security and UAVs (or UASs as we must now call them – Unmanned Aerial Systems) have been the basis for resolutions at previous assemblies.



The benefits of the IAOPA World Assemblies are not simply confined to presenting coordinated views on aspects of general aviation, and the ability for delegates to network and compare problems and solutions in individual countries is invaluable. Holding the recent affair in Greece is a significant achievement in itself, as, at the planning stage, Greece was known to be a country in which general aviation operated only under sufferance, with the military and commercial operators dominating the scene. Great credit must go to AOPA Hellas President Yiouli Kalafati and her local helpers, support from other European AOPAs, including AOPA UK, in getting the show on the road. But the achievement of establishing general aviation as an activity to be properly recognised and promoted within Greece, through the publicity surrounding the Assembly and the concurrent exhibition, 'Icarus 2008', must represent the icing on the cake.

This illustrates the advantage of speaking with one co-ordinated voice, obtained through the resolution process. However, it is clear that the higher the level of desired influence, the wider the participation and the greater the effort required to achieve the objective. Hence, IAOPA World Assemblies do not happen more than once every two years. But at the European Regional AOPA level, meetings can be and are arranged more often, usually two or three times a year. Nearer to home, i.e. within the UK, meetings to coordinate unified responses and strategies for the future can occur relatively often, monthly if need be. Individual associations and organisations contribute to many groups in which coordinated views are of value. GASCo, the General Aviation Safety Council, and GAAC, the General Aviation Awareness Council, are two such specialist bodies that aim to spread the safety message to pilots in the UK, and to promulgate awareness of the value and importance of GA, especially to government, respectively. Developing strategies for the benefit of future GA in the UK now falls to a committee, the General Aviation Strategy Forum, comprising representatives from the major GA member organisations, set up in the wake of the CAA's Strategic Review of 2007.

When obviously common interests such as safety, GA awareness and future strategy are filtered out of the equation, it becomes increasingly hard for individual associations and organisations to seek that single voice at a lower level, simply because the specialist activities represented by those bodies can be widely different. Thus, the ideal airspace requirements of gliders and business jet aircraft are probably so opposed to each other that it may not be possible to achieve an agreed common view that perfectly satisfies both parties. The matter is pursued here because AOPA is often asked why it does not merge with other organisations to form a much bigger body having wider representation, providing the one single voice for GA in the UK. Leaving aside actual mergers as far too difficult, verging on the impossible (as witness the valiant but unsuccessful attempt by two colleague associations recently), the answer is hopefully apparent from the above paragraphs, in that we already have a workable system that provides the single voice at the highest level. It is a great strength to be able to quote the co-ordinated views of 66 individual AOPA member organisations. It has served us well in the past and continues to do so, and I believe our members place great value on IAOPA, and the role AOPA UK plays within it.

George Done