

General Aviation

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Articles, photographs and news items from AOPA members and other readers are welcome. Ideally they should be on a disk, or they can be emailed to pat@richmondaviation.co.uk. Photographs may also be emailed to this address. They should be high-resolution (300DPI). Alternatively, hard copy and photographic prints or slides can be posted to Richmond Aviation at the address above. While every care is taken with submitted material, we cannot make absolute guarantees that material will be returned in perfect condition.

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Front cover:
Mooney
Photo: Mooney

Chairman's message

Growing the membership

The beginning of September is always a time for reflection in the run-up to the Annual General Meeting which will have been and gone by the time this October issue of *General Aviation* pops through your letterbox. The formalities of approval of the accounts, election and re-election of Board members and appointment of auditors are normally quickly dealt with, but the informal discussion which follows usually includes some reflective observations on the work of AOPA over the past year, its successes and current standing within the aviation community, not only in that of the UK but including the wider European scene.

Membership subscriptions provide a substantial proportion of AOPA's income, and it is heart warming to note that in the year to the end of August, this has remained pretty much constant, at a time when it was feared that the recession would have a dramatic impact on membership numbers. I believe the reason for this relies on the strong support for AOPA and the belief on behalf of the membership that we are continuing to do the right things in striving for and maintaining a viable climate in which owners and pilots can pursue general aviation activities. But, it is a perpetual struggle, as the articles on the legacy of the recently retired chairman of the CAA, the continuance of the IMC rating, spectrum pricing, and security in this issue of *General Aviation* amply demonstrate. And AOPA's efforts must also reach into Europe, a case in point being the extra financial burden that must initially be borne by maintenance providers and ultimately by aircraft owners as a result of the hopelessly over-administrative EASA Part M maintenance regime, the subject of my rant "Eurocracy gone mad?" in the December 2008 issue of *General Aviation*. There is further news on this topic, briefly reported within, on a small alleviation to the full Part M, entitled by some as the so-called Part M Lite.



Another example of the difficulties we face in keeping GA viable dropped into my in-tray the other day in the form of a report commissioned for the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority on the comparison of the cost of flying training in Australia, USA, New Zealand and the UK. It almost goes without saying that the report concluded that the cost of NAA compliance, commercial licence issue and Avgas prices were found to be hugely greater in the UK than in the other countries (the cost comparison was based on August 2007 figures, but it is doubtful if more recent figures would affect the overall conclusions). The cost of flying training is a major parameter in the viability of general aviation in any country, as high costs make learning to fly as a private pursuit less attractive compared with other recreational activities, or, as a pre-cursor to professional pilot qualifications, less attractive than training outside UK, all tending to diminish the flight training industry as a whole and, with it, all the other products and facilities on offer such as aircraft hire, with a knock-on effect on the equipment and maintenance suppliers. Despite this, a call to the flying club based at my own base at White Waltham elicited the response that last month had been excellent for flight training business, with no sign (yet) of the recession biting. However, it is thought that many of the less urban aerodromes away from large centres of population have seen a significant downturn in business.

If there was ever a time to keep the membership numbers healthy, this is it. GA in the UK, and beyond into Europe, does have a happy future provided we recognise that it takes time, effort and, yes, money to achieve this desirable state. As I mentioned in the second paragraph above, AOPA's income depends largely on members' subscriptions, and I would urge you as individual pilot/owner, instructor or corporate member to persuade those aviators out there who benefit from AOPA's efforts without contributing to join us. The easiest way to do so is online at www.aopa.co.uk; alternatively you can call our membership secretary at the office on 0207 834 5631.

George Done