

Channel Islands ATC rescinds PPR demand

Air traffic control authorities in the Channel Islands have withdrawn their demand that VFR flights into the islands be subject to prior permission after a backlash from general aviation. The PPR requirement, introduced earlier this summer, was abandoned on September 14th.

The discord engendered between pilots and air traffic authorities in the islands has led to the formation of a joint ATC-GA working group where incipient problems can be defused before they explode.

The imposition by Jersey ATC of a 'prior permission' requirement on VFR flights, imposed

despite the fact that air traffic in the Channel Islands is down by some 20 percent on a few years ago, prompted a furious reaction from local pilots and regular GA visitors. The rule, introduced without effective consultation, added yet more bureaucracy to the already-bureaucratic process of arranging a flight to the Channel Islands, which operate under Class A airspace despite the fact that traffic there is relatively light.

The new working group, called rather prosaically the Channel Islands Air Traffic Control and General Aviation Working Group, was called a 'great success' by Fergus Woods, Director of

Civil Aviation for the islands, and by Charles Strasser, AOPA's Channel Islands Chairman. Discussion of the PPR issue at the first working group meeting was described as "frank and honest". Afterwards Charles Strasser said: "This working group will allow the GA community to be consulted on all future changes to operations in Channel Islands airspace in a timely fashion.

"The forum will enable us to work with the DCA and ATC management to make visits to the Channel Islands easier and more attractive to the wider community that AOPA represents. This will also filter through to the ongoing work to identify the true economic contribution that the GA community brings to the Channel Islands' States."

Both sides seem to accept that a major overhaul of Channel Islands airspace is overdue. There is no practical justification for the imposition of such a massive area of Class A airspace, and a more flexible structure would allow easier and safer traffic flows.

A new multi-million-pound air traffic control system is at the root of the current problem, with the authorities saying they were forced to introduce a PPR system – initially accessible only on the internet via a 17-step form-filling process – because they were having difficulty handling the current diminished level of traffic. The PPR form largely duplicated the information already entered onto VFR flight plan forms which all British pilots must file before flying to the Channel Islands, along with the GAR form. The PPR also applied to Channel Islands residents, who needed an online slot before they could return home. Oddly, there were no restrictions on VFR flights transiting Channel Islands airspace, or on GA IR movements. Following angry exchanges a PPR system by telephone was added and the islands' authorities began the progressive withdrawal of the prior permission requirement.

Charles Strasser said the PPR demand betrayed inadequate performance of systems and equipment which was "not fit for purpose" when compared with the performance of the old system. He produced statistics to show that by comparison with air traffic control areas elsewhere in the world the Channel Islands are a quiet backwater, with no apparent need for Class A airspace restrictions. Moves are now afoot to introduce more flexibility to Channel Islands airspace.

Social

The AOPA CI Region organised a social get-together with air traffic controllers on September 18th at the Jersey Aero Club, which was described by Charles Strasser as a great success, with lots of lively discussions undoubtedly leading to a better understanding of each others expectations. No fewer than 20 ATC and 30 GA pilots took part. Seven GA pilots agreed to give ATCOs with no flight experience, flights in their aircraft, and a pairing will be established together with a plan of procedure. Charles Strasser says: "Many positive comments about the event have been received. Hopefully it will rekindle the close relationship GA once had with the whole ATC team." ■

Part M – all cost, no benefit

The article 'What's wrong with Part M?' in *General Aviation* for August 2011 brought the welcome news that EASA had finally agreed to a review of the Part M maintenance requirements as they apply to general aviation. AOPA members and their maintainers were invited to provide comments on a questionnaire placed on the AOPA website. EASA had asked for responses to a number of different aspects of the maintenance regime and these were listed in the questionnaire. These were: format of the rules, generic maintenance programmes, indirect approval procedures, approval/acceptance and repairs and modifications, acceptance of components from USA and Canada, scope of work authorised to the pilot-owner, scope of work authorised to independent certifying staff, licensing requirements of certifying staff, qualification and position requirements for airworthiness review staff, performance of the airworthiness review and issue of ARC/recommendation, and ACAM programme for GA aircraft. Some further questions were added for which the answers were of specific interest to AOPA, namely, how much more has Part M cost the owner (compared to before), is Part M better value for money, and have increased maintenance costs reduced flying hours, and, if so, by how much? Altogether thirteen questionnaires were completed plus two additional responses not in the questionnaire format. Of the total of fifteen, five were from maintainers of which two were also owners, and a further ten from owners, of which three were also deeply involved in the running of flight training organisations. This may not seem like an overwhelmingly large overall response, but the replies carried a wealth of useful detail and valuable information.

Feedback in more or less the same format was also sent to EASA from the AOPAs of Germany, Iceland, Italy and the Netherlands, plus one in similar vein as a result of coordination with IAOPA Europe from LAMA – Europe (Light Aircraft Manufacturers Association Europe, based in the Czech Republic). AOPA Sweden had already submitted a document that covered fine detail within Part M that included positive suggestions for changing the wording appropriately. AOPA UK sent all the individual responses in the form of a spreadsheet, as did Germany, as well as a summary of the feedback where the main message from the respondents was clear and unequivocal.

Regarding the format of the rules, as expected, the unanimous opinion was that they are difficult to understand and open to interpretation. Alleviations were recommended for light aircraft where the maintenance requirements are inappropriate and more geared to the needs of large transport aircraft. This, and the responses to the other aspects, from the various countries, although jokingly referred to by the Swedish AOPA correspondent as 'What we don't want', as compared to the Swedish 'What we do want', nevertheless effectively provide a set of clear objectives for EASA if an improvement to the system from GA's perspective is to be achieved.

As for increased costs, typically for a fixed-wing aircraft this was of the order of £800 in the UK but at least double this in Germany, Iceland, Italy and the Netherlands. For maybe three-quarters of respondents, a reduction in flying hours was typically 20 to 30 percent. Value for money? A resounding 'No!'

All the comments are to be assimilated as a guide to the content for discussion at a Part M General Aviation Workshop to be held in Cologne on the 27th October 2011 that will be attended by representatives from several country AOPAs amongst others. Part M Lite was promised by EASA a few years ago, but fell by the wayside due to lack of 'time' (would commitment be a better word?); maybe it will be resurrected as a way of dealing with the groundswell of dissatisfaction with Part M from GA owners and maintainers alike, now that we have it foisted upon us. – *George Done*

Strange island games

Let's hope that Jersey's new ATC-GA working group gets results fast – it certainly has its work cut out. The following story would tend to suggest that Jersey believes that aeroplanes are there to serve the air traffic control system, rather than vice versa. It certainly betrays a lack of knowledge of the basics of aviation on the part of those who impose these unsafe and baffling rules.

The author is an airline pilot with some 13,600 hours, and his experience of the Channel Islands includes having flown a Handley

Page Herald around the islands for two years in the early 90s. He has some 4,000 hours on light aircraft – again, many of them around the Channel Islands. He writes:

'On the morning of Wednesday 22nd June, I held a short and concise brief for our group flight to Alderney, consisting of three Luscombes (G-BRUG, G-AJKB and G-AGMI) and PA28, G-BEYL. Included in this brief was the response from Jersey ATC (having checked the weather

was suitable) to my offer of a group formation entry, thereby utilising just the one radio and one transponder. The intention was to cut down on radio 'chatter' and clutter on the radar. I offered the callsign 'Uniform Golf Combine', as had been appreciated by Bournemouth ATC and Plymouth Military. This was declined, and I was told to expect the group to be split up, as a new procedure had been put in place and standard separation was now required for Class A airspace. On enquiring what this was likely to be, I was informed 1,000 feet separation vertically, and/or 5nm laterally. I asked for any possible compromise, but was informed that none was available.

Now fully briefed, the group accepted this unhappily, and elected to depart in a formation. Approaching 50N, on contact with Jersey ATC, we were told to make individual calls and to squawk separate codes, even though I announced that Alderney was in sight, hoping we could remain close together. Unfortunately this was declined, and we were separated individually by 1,000 feet, one Luscombe being instructed to climb from 1,000 feet to 4,000 feet. However the PA28, displaying good airmanship, offered to take the 4,000 foot clearance, so the Luscombe only had to climb to 3,000 feet! Myself and G-KB were then sent off on different headings in the direction of Cap de la Hague, as a result of which the group lost sight of one another. I queried the headings we were given, and the reply was 'to maintain separation'. I believe G-KB and G-UG were on these headings in order to facilitate a wide right base (again by several miles) onto runway 26 at Alderney, due to northbound IFR traffic. Due to strong headwinds in the region of 35kts, it took G-KB and G-UG some considerable time to reach the runway from our easterly position off of Alderney. On contact with Alderney we were all cleared in visually from our present positions and given individual priorities to land, myself being number 3. Interestingly, we still had difficulty in spotting each other's relative positions. At

all times we complied with ATC's instructions, which were clear and unambiguous.

That evening, the events south of 50N were discussed by the group, and the general feeling was one of an unnecessary amount of being 'buggered about!' Confusion and frustration were other feelings that were generally expressed.

Some relevant observations made by our group:

- 1) Being separated to such a point was bordering on a safety issue, as we could no longer see each other, compounded by the fact that in the unlikely event of an engine failure, we would have had great difficulty in finding the ditched aircraft (safety in numbers).
- 2) We were of the impression that Jersey Radar didn't know or appreciate the type of aircraft we were flying, and of the limited performance that they are capable of. Being requested to climb from 1,000 to 4,000 feet in an aircraft with a limited climb rate, and then being asked to descend shortly afterwards, is very frustrating to all.
- 3) Such a long, wide base leg, interrupting departing traffic and in such good VFR conditions, was also deemed very frustrating. (Possibly also for Alderney ATC?)

Our group overwhelmingly felt that if we had been able to remain in loose formation in good weather at or below 2,000 feet, in sight of each other and operating with one radio and transponder for all, it would be of great benefit to all concerned. Whilst we appreciate this is Class A airspace, improvement on Jersey's present entry procedure, allowing a small group of aircraft to enter the zone together at 50N, should be sought.

Over the following two days, the next series of flights from Alderney to Guernsey, and Guernsey to 50N, in formation, operating with one radio (callsign 'Uniform Golf Combine') and one transponder was a delight to all. Stream landing at Guernsey, reducing runway occupancy time, exhibited good airmanship both from ATC and in the air. ■



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Success for GA at Wycombe Air Park?

By David Ogilvy

As long ago as August 2008 AOPA began to smell the proverbial rat regarding the future of Wycombe Air Park – still Booker aerodrome to many aviation people. We approached Wycombe District Council in the hope of receiving confirmation that it would continue to be available for unrestricted flying use and our fears were strengthened when we received a response: the authority was in the very early stages of considering proposals.

The AOPA file on Wycombe is among the fullest in our possession; to give readers the subsequent story in detail would occupy far more space than can be justified when there is so much activity in other spheres that warrant publicity in the association's house journal. However, the tale is one of extensive bitterness and involves far more than the aviation interests.

As long ago as 1965 the then Secretary of State for Defence produced a document on the Conveyance of Land, as the Royal Air Force had no further use for the site. The document contained several relevant entries including a constraint that nothing may be done that would inhibit its continued use as an aerodrome.

Clearly big money – really big money – was behind the proposals that followed. In brief, the plan was for construction of the Wycombe Community Stadium and Sports Project, which would include seating for

almost 20,000 spectators. A main driver was the London Wasps rugby team, with Wycombe Wanderers football club also in the arena. The latter had no desire to move from its present site and their supporters objected very strongly to the proposals. However, as both bodies were owned by the same organisation, conflict began very quickly. The proposal formed the subject of a consultation document prepared by Wycombe District Council and more than 8,500 responses were received. Most were objections and, fortunately, the aviation interests were supported by large numbers of local residents, who (inter alia) could see the problems that would arise on the nearby roads. Several of their people appealed to AOPA for help, so we had ample ammunition with which to process the case.

How would this land-grab affect flying operations? The existing runway 06/24 would be scrapped and a new one 09/27 built parallel to the motorway. Although it would be lengthened to encourage use by heavier aircraft, the flying area would be confined to a narrow strip and all crosswind facilities would be eliminated, forcing the very active gliding club and other light GA interests to move out.

After a long silence, confirmation was received (just too late for the August issue) that the whole project had been scrapped. The Council's Code of Conduct prevents members with 'personal or prejudicial interest' from voting on such issues, but the four Cabinet members who were allowed to

do so rejected the application unanimously. Although, from past experience, AOPA is aware that this *may* not be the end of any such disastrous scheme, at present there is much celebration and on one day hundreds of people marched through the town to publicise their victory.

For many years Wycombe Air Park has been a mainstay in the geographical network of aerodromes available for widespread use by GA interests; so any downgrading of the site's ability to handle whatever is sought by current or potential users is damaging to the cause on a national as well as a local basis. Every active aerodrome has a part to play, as each one depends on the others to maintain its position in the scheme of things. No aerodrome on its own can justify hopes for a future, yet collectively a supply of available sites within reasonable reach of each centre of population, commerce, industry or tourism, can strengthen the situation for everyone in GA. So the Wycombe decision is very important for us all.

This is another case supporting the need for constant vigilance in seeking-out potential problems before they reach critical stages. Quite often, people who should notify AOPA of approaching danger fail to do so, yet here your association was ahead of the game – in this instance literally! We do rely largely, though, on tip-offs that can be of benefit to GA's longer-term health, so if any whiff of likely trouble blows your way, we are ready on 'receive'. ■

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MWG settles down

The AOPA Members Working Group met at White Waltham in August – the original idea of having the group's meetings at different airfields around the country has fallen into abeyance because wherever it went, much the same people turned up. White Waltham seems to be handy for most of them and can now be considered the group's spiritual home...

but any member is welcome to attend any meeting, and the group can go on the road again if the need arises.

Chairman Chris Royle set out some of the arrangements that were in place for the AOPA Bonus Day at Duxford on

September 10th – see separate section in these pages. He described the line-up of speakers as something of a coup, with Cliff Whittaker and Dawn Lindsey from the CAA on the bill.

We reviewed the experimental teleconference which fell between MWG meetings and discussed ways or ironing out the kinks; all in all it was a great success and saved everybody a lot of travelling, and it won't be hard to work out ways to ensure that everyone is included. It won't replace face-to-face meetings, though.

John Murray gave an update on his

work with the UK Borders Agency, where there are still problems to be ironed out. John has been creating a GAR app which must overcome a number of bureaucratic obstacles before it can be offered to members.

Nick Wilcock updated the group on the new Olympic airspace proposals, covered elsewhere in these pages; the changes, he said, were huge, and hugely welcome. The date changes were most significant, and specific attention had been given to the problems of individual airfields. The MoD, he thought, had been genuinely helpful, and of course it helped to have NATS, the CAA, general aviation and most of the DfT singing from the same hymn sheet and proposing workable alternatives.

Slots will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so GA has to be careful to maximise the potential – no 'just in case' blocking out of slots which then go unused. Student solos will be allowed, but it will be important that the instructor ensure that the student gets away on time, is fully briefed on the radio procedures, and is comfortable with RT. At the next meeting of the AOPA Instructors Committee, Nick said, some thought would be given to advice to instructors during the Olympics.

Nick also gave an update on the tortuous progress of EASA's proposals on instrument flying. The Notice of Proposed Amendment which will tell us what's on their minds has been put back again, to 'some time in September'... the French private pilots instrument rating was an interesting development and it remained to be seen how EASA would respond to it. Time was short, deadlines pressing, and it all looked a bit messy. Whatever is proposed, Nick said, we don't want the CAA to take its eye off the IMC rating ball. The IMCR was the real safety win, and the French had already established with their decision to retain the *brevet de base* that national considerations held sway.

Martin Robinson raised the issue of forming groups of ambassadors for aviation – encouraging people to take up the mantle of promotion, talking to scout groups, schools, talking about career possibilities in aviation, in flying, in maintenance, in administration. AOPA could produce material for them, if we could get the people to carry such a scheme forward.

Other topics covered included English Language Proficiency accreditation and proposals to charge for it; possible transfer of regulatory functions to AOPA; the AOPA regional reps network; and the 'future size and shape' exercise upon which the Members Working Group has embarked, which will need a meeting all to itself. ■



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Aerodromes under threat - again

General aviation flying sites have enjoyed at least some measure of protection from excessively zealous developers through planning policy guidance notes – especially the much-used PPG13. However, all this is to be swept aside through a proposed National Planning Policy Framework, which will include a ‘presumption to grant sustainable building development.’

Almost certainly this will lead to applications for new buildings in the vicinity of aerodromes and airstrips and some of these could constitute safety hazards by obstructing approach/climb-out paths and other areas. Now that flying training may be carried out at unlicensed aerodromes, responsibility for ensuring that a site is safe rests largely with flying instructors, so all concerned need to be aware of what is on the horizon.

The General Aviation Awareness Council has taken a lead on this and AOPA strongly endorses the GAAC’s actions. –

David Ogilvy ■

Airbox Aware winner

The winner of the AOPA Airbox Aware for July was Dave Smith, pictures here with a Piper-yellow Cessna 172 he flies regularly in



Cyprus. The name of every new member of AOPA goes into a monthly draw for the Aware, which is an excellent anti-infringement tool that warns of controlled airspace nearby.

AOPA China fly-in canned

The first-ever helicopter fly-in in China, organised by AOPA China, was cancelled at short notice following the crash of a helicopter near the site of the fly-in. The fly-in had been expected to attract 20 privately-owned helicopters to a northern suburb of Beijing, but after the crash AOPA China said it had raised ‘official and public safety concerns’ leading to the cancellation.

The helicopter, an AW139, was operated by the Beijing Police Department and was returning from a search and rescue exercise when it crashed into one of Beijing’s most important drinking water reservoirs, killing four of the five people on board. The crash came less than two months after the establishment of the Beijing police aviation unit with four helicopters; plans have been announced to introduce six more over the next five years.

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