

All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG-GA) – An Update

Strength in numbers

First off, I'm delighted to let you know that the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG-GA) has now recruited a 207 Parliamentary members. This makes us one of the biggest all-party group on any subject. Testament to the importance that Members of Parliament now place on the grass-roots of our £60bn UK Aviation sector.

So how did we get here?

Actually, the person who stirred parliament's General Aviation passion was Carol Voderman (of TV Countdown fame). Carol is our Ambassador, so in her own words, "I campaigned hard for all of us in General Aviation to have parliamentary representation for legislation, rather than attempt to fight for airfields and other matters solely on an individual basis. This very new APPG is now the largest in parliament, which gives us all a greater chance of being heard in the corridors of power."

Working in Groups

On the subject of getting our agenda heard across Whitehall, we have now established 7 different aviation Working Groups. These cover Airfields, Airspace, Tax & Regulation, Heritage, STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math), Manufacturing & Engineering and Drones & Model Aircraft. Each subject has spawned a vast amount of work. We have carried out research, commissioned Inquiries, taken our concerns direct to Ministers and way more besides. You can learn about each of the 2019 Working Group programmes on our website www.generalaviationappg.uk.

Give us a flavour

The body of work being carried out by the APPG is enormous. But we know most people are too busy to dig into our website to get the detail, so I've assembled a few highlights.

- **AIRFIELDS:** Work to protect our airfields continues relentlessly, with the likes of Redhill, Fair Oaks, Wellesbourne and Gamston currently in the frame; to name but a few. Our primary focus is ensuring Ministers understand that to generate jobs and economic growth, the UK needs a secure network of General Aviation airfields. So, in addition to having won a new General Aviation paragraph in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) last year, we're working with the Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government regarding issuing new guidance to local planners on airfields and their critical importance to UK plc.
- **AIRSPACE:** The Lord Kirkhope (Lower) Airspace Inquiry is nearing its conclusion. Throughout both written and Oral Hearings in parliament, the Inquiry has taken evidence on the way that airspace allocation is currently executed, how technology like Electronic Conspicuity could be used and how rules regarding airspace change could be addressed. We expect the report to be issued by the APPG in the spring and submitted to the 2050 Green Paper on Aviation.
- **TAX & REGULATION:** This group is focussed on matters including instructor shortages, tax (VAT) on training and safety products and duty on fuel. Useful meetings with Treasury Ministers have given us cause to think we are making some headway with the argument that our current tax regime is doing serious harm to the UK's flight training sector and therefore the UK economy.
- **HERITAGE:** This Group is tackling all manner of issues including work on getting the RAF's grounded fleet of powered and unpowered Cadet gliders (Vigilant's, better known as the Grob G109) back in the air. The aim is to get these back flying again so our aspiring future pilots and air cadets can gain valuable experience. They are being assisted by Aerobility, The LAA and Spitfire Heritage Trust to name a few.

- **STEM:** We believe that the future of General Aviation is best secured by linking our sector with the high-tech jobs of the future. So this Working Group is led by Karen Spencer, the Principal of Stansted STEM Aviation College, and standby for a full work programme to be published on our website shortly.
- **Manufacturing & Engineering:** As we go to press, membership of this new group is being finalised. We want to ensure that the UK is at the heart of engineering technology, including electric flight. So, look out for more as this team gets established and publishes their programme very shortly.
- **Drones & Model Flying:** Our newest working group. Jointly Chaired by the heads of the Association of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (ARPAS) and the British Model Flying Association, again – we'll be publishing more about their work shortly.

Meetings... meetings...

Overarching all of the incredible activity by our Working Groups, the management team continue to hold meetings with various Ministers and senior civil servants. We are often joined by experts from our various Working Groups at these meetings. For example, we have recently met with ministers from:

- The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy about apprenticeships and skills.
- The Ministry of Defence about ensuring their present and former airfields remain accessible to General Aviation as much as possible.
- The Department for Transport about all manner of General Aviation objectives.
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government about changes to the planning regime to help ensure our network of airfields is better protected.
- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport about heritage museums and the Daks over Europe event (see below).
- The Foreign Secretary about Daks over Europe.
- The Treasury about tax and regulation issues (see above).

Events, my dear, events

Our goal is to help make the United Kingdom the best country in the world for General Aviation. One way to achieve this is to support larger General Aviation events. So this year we're backing a number of key activities and we would love your support. First off, grab your diary and make a note of these dates.

- Saturday 27th April 2019 is the Duxford General Aviation Exhibition & Safety Day. Jointly sponsored by the Imperial War Museum and the APPG-GA, the goal is to turn this event into a big feature in the GA calendar. Open to everyone from amateur to professional pilots, aircraft enthusiast and future pilots – the day will include aviation advice, safety talks from key organisations, networking opportunities, flying display and more. Exhibitors can book access to the event by calling Sue on 01223 499322.
- Thursday 13th to Saturday 15th June 2019 is Aero Expo/Heli Expo at Wycombe Air Park. Again, the APPG is throwing its weight behind this event. With 30,000 visitors over the three days, it's already Europe's second largest GA event. This year it's expanding further and you simply won't want to miss it.

- Next up is an important commemoration. This year is the 75th anniversary of the D-Day parachute drop over Normandy. Called “DAKS over Normandy” approximately 35 DC3’s will be departing Duxford on the 5th June loaded with paratroopers to be dropped over Normandy in a sight unlikely to ever be seen again.

Last word from our Ambassador, Carol Voderman

“Bringing the opportunities available in aviation to young men and women is not always obvious, so I fully support – and I hope you will too – the work being undertaken by the APPG. Please give your support to this group.”

We couldn’t put it better ourselves. If you’re not doing so already, please follow us on Twitter for daily updates: @APPG_UK (and please do also retweet our news to your own network).

Until next time,

Matthew Bolshaw

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