

General Aviation

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Front cover:
Antonov An-2
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Chairman's message

Word beginning with 'O'

No, not 'Olympic', although by the time this issue of *General Aviation* drops through your letter box the London 2012 Olympic Airspace will have been operational for a week or more. But it might be mentioned in passing that a huge amount of effort has been expended in alleviating the initial requirements by the team led by Dawn Lindsay, CAA's Head of Olympic Planning, aided in part by all the aviation associations including AOPA, and the aviation press, and that it would be a shame if pilots were put off by the flight planning requirements and the rather daunting looking penalties for transgressions, innocent or otherwise. But at the time of writing this piece, it looks as if the current dire weather may continue well into the period of the restrictions and curtail flying activity anyway!

The word I'm thinking about is the preposition 'or' and its connection with that big and costly headache for general aviation, EASA Part M. This maintenance regulatory regime addressing continuing airworthiness requirements was one of the first offerings from EASA following its establishment ten years ago, and was all-encompassing, in that both commercial air transport and general aviation fell under its purview. As has been mentioned in previous issues of *General Aviation*, EASA has finally woken up to the fact that Part M as it stands is overly complicated for GA and a task force consisting of a small number of well informed individuals representing a spread of interests across GA has been meeting in Cologne at regular intervals. Three two-day meetings have taken place with two more expected and these have meant a lot of hard work for the representatives, our man representing IAOPA being Dan Åkerman from AOPA Sweden. Dan is an aircraft owner who has worked many years in the aircraft industry and has also run a CAMO. His dedication to the task is much more than should reasonably be expected of a volunteer. The hoped-for end result of the meetings should be a flexible regime based on a common sense minimum maintenance programme that excludes the many unnecessary and sometimes unworkable complications of the current Part M, an example of which revolves around the use of the word 'or' in a particular section of the 329 page consolidated version of Part M.

Within the section that indicates how the owner or operator's aircraft maintenance programme should achieve acceptable means of compliance is the statement that this "...should normally be based on...the relevant chapters of the maintenance manual OR any other maintenance data..." The latter include Airworthiness Directives, Service Bulletins, Letters and Instructions of which only the ADs are strictly mandatory. Unfortunately, a lack of further precise definition within Part M has led to some NAAs erring on what is perceived to be the safe side by making the SBs etc mandatory, leading in some cases to extra work and administration that contributes nothing to flight safety, whereas the decision to address such maintenance tasks is really up to the owner/operator and his/her maintainer. Dan has received an admission from Eric Sivel, Deputy Head of Rulemaking at EASA, that had they foreseen the current outcome they would have written things differently.

Without inside knowledge it is impossible to judge how difficult or easy it has been for CAT to adapt to Part M but the original plan to make one size fit all seems to have been misguided. The situation has something in common with that at ICAO many years ago, causing IAOPA to lobby and achieve a much reduced and more appropriate set of standards and recommended practices (SARPS) for GA. In between watching some very large aircraft being extremely enthusiastically flown at the Farnborough Airshow earlier in July, I pondered about the common areas between CAT and GA. Apart from the physical laws governing flight, there's not much. The operational airspeed and airspace regimes are mostly separate and there is a gulf between the levels of engineering and technical sophistication. So there seems to be no reason why GA should not have its own Part M. In fact, a few years ago there was a move to establish a Part M 'Lite' but somehow there seemed to be not enough motivation from EASA for pursuing the idea. This time, however, the solid progress made so far by the task force for GA gives good cause for optimism.

By the time of the AOPA Bonus Day at Duxford on Sunday 23rd September memories of the 2012 Olympics will have faded, and maybe the weather will have improved to the extent of encouraging lots of members and non-members to fly in. I look forward to meeting many of you there!



George Done