

Will Ofcom see sense?

Ofcom's consultation on charging for aviation radio spectrum has the unique distinction of having united every facet of the business, from the airlines to the regulator to the multifarious membership groups. Whether the fact that opposition is solid at 100 percent will make any difference to Ofcom's plans remains to be seen.

AOPA's position remains unchanged – however sedulously they try to disguise it, the proposal is a blatant stealth tax cooked up by the Treasury, which is cock-a-hoop at having found something new it can get money out of. Ofcom has been detailed to do the dirty work, and the consultation exercise is an embarrassing and irrelevant legalistic necessity.

Ofcom's original proposal to tax the emergency services for radio use was abandoned after a public outcry. It now plans to charge £2,600 a year for an aerodrome A/G service, £9,900 for ATIS and VOLMET, and up to £19,800 for VHF digital links. The result may be that hard-pressed aerodromes give up their radios and revert to a signals

square. Others will abandon pricey ATIS frequencies, increasing congestion on active frequencies. Either way, safety will be affected – but Ofcom says safety is not its responsibility. If its proposals create danger, it says, it's up to the CAA to sort it out.

Martin Robinson says: "This is a stealth tax pure and simple, and it will cause great and pointless harm to general aviation. Ofcom in its present form looks likely to be abolished buy the new government, but that is small consolation to those who will have to pay for this nonsense for years to come.

"It remains to be seen how things will have to be re-ordered to cope with the Ofcom tax, but one thing is for certain – safety will be hit." ■



NATS drops two NDBs

NATS has announced the decommissioning of two Non Directional Beacons, at (LIC) and Scotstown Head (SHD), effective from July 29th.

AOPA is seeking from the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy a co-ordinated plan of transition from terrestrial navigation systems to a space-based system, and these withdrawals are ahead of any such plan being agreed.

Consultation by the CAA in 2008 established that there would be little impact on operations in controlled airspace if en-route NDBs were withdrawn, and that while they were useful for GA operations in IMC or marginal VFR outside controlled airspace, it was thought that VOR/DME and GPS could take up the slack. Two waypoints, PEDIG for LIC and PETOX for SHD, became effective on May 6th.

NATS En Route Limited, (NERL) the company operating the NDBs, now says it is planning to withdraw five more NDBs – Henton, New Galloway, Westcott, Whitegate and Woodley – beginning in 2012. NERL anticipates that Burnham, Chiltern and Epsom NDBs will remain in service until around 2016, although these dates are subject to revision.

Farnborough Air Show restrictions

By Irv Lee

It's hard to believe it's two years since the last one, but once again we have the Farnborough Air Show in July. For UK business, it's the premier place to show off aviation for about a week and sign much-needed contracts. To pilots crossing Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey and Sussex, the restrictions of flying are a major factor to be considered for 15 days of display practice and

(125.25 MHz) will be on air as usual. If there were occasional brief periods where opportunities to transit the restricted areas exist, ATC would allow that if asked. However, the general message is that without such specific permission from Farnborough ATC, entering any designated restricted area during the published activity times has to be avoided or it could lead to a prosecution, which is not actually the worst case scenario when you think through the potential

consequences of entering an active fast jet display area without clearance.

The restrictions will be listed on each day as NOTAMs and mentioned on the AIS recorded restrictions number 0500 354802 (or 0208 750 3939 for pilots wanting the landline version for mobile use or from abroad). However, a picture is worth a thousand words, so the official Air Information Circular with details and diagram is recommended reading for July if you are planning to fly in the area, and it would be good to see it printed off and left in cockpits, near signing-out sheets, and on club notice boards from late June.

At the time of going to press for this magazine, the diagrams of the restrictions have not received the final legal seal of approval, so it would be unwise to publish them provisionally here, but you can certainly find them easily even before they come out as the official AIC. GASCo's anti-

infringement website FlyOnTrack (www.flyontrack.co.uk) is part of the UK's Airspace Safety Initiative giving hot news, links and information concerning navigation, restrictions, and plenty more. If you've never looked at the site, it's worth exploring. It's a national and permanent resource, not just there for this show.

Not only will FlyOnTrack have an early copy of the restricted airspace diagrams for the Farnborough Air Show, once the official AIC is actually published, the FlyOnTrack Hot News on its home page will have a direct link straight to it. Twitter fans will also be kept up to date on many such matters, and certainly this, via tweets from flyontrack.

What makes Farnborough Air

authorisations, and of course, the show 'proper'.

These restrictions of flying are from Monday July 12th to Monday July 26th 2010 inclusive, and Farnborough are asking for your help in not only making sure the event goes smoothly with no infringements of the restrictions, but in spreading the word to other pilots in advance to ensure nothing comes as a surprise on the actual day. I have suggested to Farnborough that they distribute carbon monoxide detector buttons overprinted with the Air Show restriction dates – I can't think of a better way of getting the message directly into the cockpit, always in the eyeline of the pilot – and it looks like that is going ahead. Look out for that useful freebie appearing before July and get one in your plane.

If you need general flight access to any restricted area in that period, (perhaps you fly from a strip in the area), it's worth discussing the matter in advance with Farnborough on 01252 526021. This is not the normal ATC number. On the actual days, the Farnborough LARS frequency in the area

Show restrictions different is that a lot of time (and hence money) has been spent analysing the real needs in order to reserve the absolute minimum amount of airspace for the minimum amount of time, and as a pilot operating in Hampshire, that's certainly good news for me and should be for everyone else. When you see and examine the two diagrams they may look at first as though large areas have been reserved, but look at the 'key' and you'll soon see that each numbered area has dates and times associated with it, and quite often, the 'outer areas' only start at higher altitudes, leaving plenty of unrestricted airspace beneath even during their activation times.

Farnborough is good for the UK economy, their ATC is one of the most friendly around, they want our help in letting the Air Show run smoothly. Let's go for zero infringements at the 2010 Show.

AIRBUS