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This paper responds to the question:- **“Set out how you would identify a Network of Airfields of strategic significance to General Aviation so that these could be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities”.**

Executive Summary

1. There is no single essential network of airfields. The UK's existing network effectively comprises a number of user based and often interdependent networks using airfields suitable for its activities. Each network has a hierarchy reflecting its user groups: the requirements of business aviation differ greatly from those of Gliders, which, in turn, differ from Microlights or balloons.
2. What we have is very largely what we need to maintain an effective GA network and support the commercial aviation industry. It has some capacity for expansion but there are concerns over whether it will be sufficient to meet the anticipated increase.
3. The UK already has an international reputation for excellence in aviation. We must continue to develop it or the industry will decline with the loss of jobs and profitable trade opportunities.
4. GA is the 'grass roots' for a combined contribution of £53 billion to UK plc.
5. Our Town planning system must be clear, consistent, and balanced. Planning Authorities need appropriate guidance to enable informed policy and decision making.
6. Legislative protection, similar to that for Railway Stations and other national infrastructure, would engender certainty and investor confidence to make the long term capital investment essential to the commercial viability of airfields.
7. Aircrew training and development relies on our extensive, diverse and generally cohesive network, this will soon be depleted unless the Government take action.
8. UK plc is promoting the development of STEM training. The aviation industry offers one of the best environments for this initiative.
9. The survey proposed should enable a practical review of the network in terms of it's current capacity and ability to meet future demand.



A Paper on UK General Aviation)

Current airfield network and future requirements (Final Draft)

The General Aviation community has asked the GAAC, its recognised 'umbrella' organisation for all GA airfield matters, to respond to the question:

“Set out how you would identify a Network of Airfields of strategic significance to General Aviation so that these could be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities”.

The GA 'Strategic Network'

There is no single essential network of airfields. The UK's existing network effectively comprises a number of user based interdependent networks using airfields suitable for its activities. Each network has a hierarchy reflecting its user groups: the requirements of business aviation differ greatly from those of Gliders, which, in turn, differ from Microlights or balloons. In many instances these uses can overlap and it is essential that this interdependence is respected and maintained. An indication of the range of formats can be gained from those invited to the General Aviation Partnership meetings hosted by the CAA (Appendix 1)

For this and the supporting reasons set out below the GAAC regards the existing network of airfields as the minimum required for current levels of General Aviation (GA) activity in the UK. Whether the existing network can cope with the increase in GA that can reasonably be expected over the coming 5/10 years is open to question. Accordingly, the GAAC strongly advocates government action to ensure the necessary legislative steps, particularly in town planning, are taken to protect them now for the benefit of this and future generations.

As a sector GA actively provides employment for nearly 40,000 people and, according to the General Economic Research Study by York Aviation in 2014, directly contributes £3billion to the national economy. Perhaps more importantly, GA provides the “grass roots” environment to enable the spectrum of aviation skills needed in the significantly larger commercial aviation industry to be inspired, encouraged and trained.

Identifying the exact number of active UK airfields is quite a complex task. The CAA Database (Appendix 2) details 134 Licensed, 716 Unlicensed and 45 Military Aerodromes. There are also a number of privately owned airstrips. In response to our request a number of GAAC member Associations have submitted lists of those airfields used by their members (see Appendix 2 - 7). Appendix 4 includes links to CAA data on Approved Training Organisations (ATO's) and CAA Registered Training Facilities (RTF's). The coverage provided may not be complete but it does evidence the diversity and reflect the various compositions within our GA network.

In 2014 some 250 million passengers passed through UK airports, current projections indicate this number will double in the next 20 years and the UK's objective should be to remain one of the global focal points for air traffic capitalising on its location, technological expertise, culture and economic strength.

The Growth of our international airports will influence the commercial GA network stimulating growth in commercial GA and inward investment to the UK leading to a significant increase in demand for licensed airfields and GA in general. Although unlicensed airfields generally make a lesser financial contribution compared to the commercial GA network, they still have a vital role as the strong vibrant environment supporting engineering, smaller Business aircraft, recreation, sports, aircrew training and STEM activities to actively encourage future generations of UK aviation.

Set against this upward trend has been a steady reduction in UK airfields generally and a substantial loss of Licensed airfields in particular as they tend to be located closer to urban areas. In recent years the number has fallen from 144 to 134 and, despite Government initiatives, 24 of those remaining are under threat, a

figure made all the more significant by the difficulties in replacing them or building in entirely new locations under current planning policies.

Licensed airfields particularly are commercial ventures reliant on utilising the full spectrum of business opportunities to survive and this means optimising an airfields facilities and physical attributes. They therefore include GA in all its guises as it is both a source of direct revenue and, indirect income through providing work for other services on the airfield. How broad this range can be is illustrated by Appendix 3, a sample airfield.

Attached as appendixes 4 - 7 are responses from most of the larger user groups within GA listing their current membership & main facilities and, in some cases, their future requirements assuming the steady growth in their branch of GA continues.

Confirmation of Government funding would enable the GAAC to work with its member Associations (see Appendix 1) to complete a detailed study of the UK network and refine the necessary forecasts. Among the aspects to be considered the following would seem to be a minimum: definition and identification of the so called "network"- what is critical/desirable/economically positive & social; quantification of the emergency/security aspect as a "network overlay"; hard validated specific arguments on valuable habitats for flora & fauna (particularly protected species and/or their environments); as visual amenity and; a focus for community activities.

The future: maintaining & enhancing the UK's pre-eminence in world GA

The value of the contribution made by today's UK Commercial aviation industry is currently £50B. The UK has the third largest aviation manufacturing industry in the world and two of the five busiest International airports. The sector is moving quickly, space tourism is upon us, Electric powered aircraft are in production, Drone sales exceed 1million units and in recent weeks £10M of government money has been allocated for our Space industry. GA is a fundamental part of this movement.

We share the Government's belief that technology in the UK is well placed to capture a significant proportion of the growth in all forms of aviation if it has a healthy and vibrant GA sector. To ensure this government needs to address the following issues.

GA needs the protection of specific legislation to safeguard Airfields. Perhaps along the lines of that already in place to protect Railway Stations since GA is another part of our Transport infrastructure.

Government needs to clarify the current planning situation with regard to the status of airfields and, remove the general confusion over the 'Brownfield' criteria that must be satisfied before an Airfield can be redeveloped. It must then cascade this information through to Local Authorities as well as the general public and, provide effective advice and support to those Authorities dealing with airfield related applications.

The current planning "policy" is both ambiguous and inconsistent, perpetuating an environment that leaves airfields very susceptible to development. Clarity is needed now to ensure protection is given our remaining airfields and suitable support and guidance given to Local Planning Authorities.

In addition to the loss of airfields, the most serious outcome of the existing situation is the deterrent effect of uncertainty on long term investment in airfields. The inability to engender investor confidence has greatly reduced their capacity to attract substantial long term capital investment into the airfields enabling them to become optimally profitable commercial operations. It has also hindered investment in new aviation facilities and equipment such as runway lighting, all weather runways (to increase operational hours) and Satellite, Radio, Navigation and flight safety aids. To overcome this disadvantage and catch up with our competitors the UK needs to create an environment conducive to private (and public) investment in facilities, training and equipment.

We accept the need to justify this protection and, in part, reflect market forces. After Security and air safety considerations each site should be encouraged to remain financially viable in its own right but, any assessment needs to start from a 'level playing field' with airfields given the opportunity to become an integrated developments incorporating a mix of industry, new housing, community facilities, visual amenities and green power generators.

The UK "benefits" from a uniquely diverse maritime climate that enables pilots to train or operate in a broader spectrum of manageable weather conditions than almost anywhere on earth. This was one of the reasons a Chinese official gave when stating that his government would like to bring all pilot training to the UK and their selection clearly demonstrates the UK's international reputation as a centre for aviation training. The GAAC fully supports the Governments stated aim to make the UK is "the best in the world" as a centre for aircrew training - a policy specifically identified in the NPPF and officially supported by the present government.

Although a smaller industry GA is the start of the 'critical path' taking many pilots, engineers, air traffic controllers and all in STEM training further into aviation so it is essential that its expansion is supported now and in the future (see Appendix 8). We believe that state investment would reap good rewards. However, all we ask is that it protects and supports GA going forward to create an environment that allows the pent up interest from private sector investors to flow through.

Pilots, even the most talented, develop through progressive learning from handling skills to cockpit management and flight safety technology. The UK's GA network has evolved and refined over more than 100 years and is key to providing the progressive challenges in distances, conditions, knowledge and planning that make good pilots.

Airfields offer an ideal environment for the development of STEM training as GA shares the same core elements as the STEM programme and the opportunity to gain practical experience in a real environment from experienced professionals and appreciate the relevance of their classroom time. This also applies to the other airfield industries such as Air Traffic Controllers, Flying Instructors, remote pilots, airfield managers, air sports and other ancillary skills.

If the Government plans to expand GA it should take this opportunity to increase the synergy between GA and military aviation by exchange of personnel and improving access to military airfields. This could assist recruitment of the most gifted pilots and broaden the skills of military pilots to ease their transition into civilian flying later in their careers. It would also require a commensurate increase in the resources of the regulating authorities of the CAA, NATS & LAA.

Accordingly we suggest consideration be given to the potential for including some military airfields in the network, particularly if there are regional gaps in commercial GA. In the current financial climate it seems sensible for the military and GA to discuss blending requirements and usage in conjunction with security based contingency planning needs in the short/medium/long term.

There is recognition within GA of the changing role of grass airfields, a view that could be summed up as "local recreational and natural habitats where aviation takes place." It is already accepted that those parts of an airfield not directly required for aviation and safely located in terms of the circuit pattern can and should be used to benefit the community. This concept could be developed to provide more and better facilities if legislative changes made long term investment viable.

In 2008 the GAAC undertook a "How green is your airfield" study with the Countryside Management Service and plans to update the study with both the CPRE and RSPB later this year. This closely links with the concept of airfields as a Civic Amenity which is the foundation of GA in Europe where Local Authority ownership is more common, a model familiar to the many international travellers in UK GA.

In many instances GA airfields have become exceptional ecological environments, having never been subjected to the chemical fertilizers and pesticides used in modern farming their grassland areas remain as rare examples of our countryside 80 or more years ago. In some instances this has meant the survival of rare species or the relocation of some animals to parts of the airfield that are necessary but not used intensively. A number of airfields are actively encouraging the protection of habitats key to the survival of rare flora and fauna (Appendix 9).

The visual amenity of most GA airfields is increasingly valued by local communities. In the past local issues have diluted support and often combined with a lack of understanding among Local Authority officials who rarely consider "the third dimension" (as set out in CAP 704) when making decisions. They also tend to focus on local concerns, which have a more direct and immediate relevance, rather than consider regional or national infrastructure requirements. In fairness recent governmental changes have reduced the extent to which local planners are given strategic and specialist direction so they are generally inclined to minimise these requirements when considering applications. This effectively implies they favour allowing redevelopment of airfields as they relieve local pressures and are often considered less contentious than other locations. This needs to change and central government needs to take the lead.

GA UK also has an prominent international profile and competes at international sporting events around the world. The UK currently leads the world in Gliding and Aerobatics while the numbers of Microlight pilots now exceeds 35,000 and organised Drone racing and usage is expanding at an exponential rate as they are developed for a range of uses from police surveillance to nature programmes.

The UK is still considered to provide the finest Professional Flight Training in the world and Brexit will provide further opportunities to attract even more Governments and Airlines to fulfill their Training requirements with UK Companies....provided airfields on which to train are still available.

As you can see from the above the interrelationships are complex and we have attempted to identify some proposals that could be implemented to enable the "network" to be practically developed in line with progress in technology to ensure that the UK has a healthy, vibrant, extensive and commercially sound GA sector.

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APPENDICES

- 1 General Aviation Partnership Members**
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Appendix 1

General Aviation Partnership - Invitees

Head GA Unit
Stakeholder Manager & Resource Planning Lead
British Rotorcraft Association
GA Aviation Advisor
GA Manager Airworthiness
GA Manager, Operations
Manager Safety Policy (PPT)
Air Pilots and the Royal Institute of Navigation
Flying Farmers Association
Surveillance Policy (AAA)
British Air Display Association
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
Association of Light Aircraft Engineers
Historic Aircraft Association
GA Policy and Strategy Delivery Senior Manager
GA Policy Officer
British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association
General Aviation Awareness Council
Helicopter Club of Great Britain
British Parachute Association
GA ANO Project Manager
PPL/IR Europe
British Helicopter Association
General Aviation Safety Council
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
GA Manager, Business Delivery and Improvement
GA Manager, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement
Light Aircraft Association
Royal Aeronautical Society Engineering Group
British Gliding Association
UK Flight Safety Committee
GA Programme Manager
British Business and General Aviation Association
British Balloon and Airship Club
Royal Aeronautical Society – General Aviation Group
General Aviation Alliance and Royal Aero Club
UK Department for Transport
Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Systems
British Gliding Association British Model Flying Association
Royal Aero Club
National Air Traffic Services
Royal Aeronautical Society – General Aviation Group
British Microlight Aircraft Association
British Model Flying Association

Appendix 2

GA Airfields - from the CAA Intelligence Department

Dear Charles,

Following conversation with Tony Rapson, please see attached the list of aerodromes/airfields utilised by CAA's Safety Intelligence team to support General Aviation-related safety analysis. This information is used primarily to support the analysis of safety occurrences. Please note that the following caveats apply:

- This database is used for information purposes only;
- The list presented is not regularly updated: the data is normally altered or updated when there is new safety information indicating alterations to the current status of a particular aerodrome/airfield or identifying new aerodrome/airfield locations;
- This means that, for example, some of the aerodromes/airfields listed will have ceased operations and closed, and some will have changed their operational nature and scope.
- The certification status and approval reference (licensed/unlicensed) of the aerodromes/airfields presented may not reflect the current certification status: you can consult the updated list of licensed aerodromes in CAA's website:
<https://www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-industry/Airports/Aerodrome-licences/Licences/Aerodrome-licences-and-boundary-maps/>
- The coordinates presented may not represent the exact location of the aerodrome / airfield; Post codes are, in some cases, approximate;
- The hyperlinks presented are, in some cases, from other sources (non-CAA and non-NATS);

It is also noteworthy that, for the aforementioned reasons, the total number of aerodromes/airfields presented in the list will not represent the total number of active aerodromes/airfields in the UK.

I trust this information is helpful – please feel free to contact me should you need additional information.

Regards,

Pedro

[Pedro Pinheiro](#)
Intelligence Lead
Intelligence
Civil Aviation Authority

Appendix 3

“Any-port” airfield - a example of user diversity on a GA airfield

Bristow Helicopters

Fixed wing and rotary training (including training flying instructors for fixed wing aircraft)

Fixed wing and rotary maintenance

Aircraft charter and sight seeing

Aerial filming for news and sporting events for BBC, ITV and Sky. NB 24 hour operation.

Aviation medical examiner - logical to locate at airfield - operates also from Heathrow

Commercial & light aircraft simulator training - commercial service for all major airlines

Commercial Airport Operator - Regional Airports Limited

Drone development project focussing on options for AGL / GNSS flight testing

Aerospace Resources Ltd - 'a dynamic company focused on delivering innovative solutions to organisations of all sizes across the aviation and aerospace sectors'

Base for private owners using aircraft for their business purposes

Kent Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance Trust - includes air ambulance service, development of specialist paramedic services, paramedic training (linked to University of Surrey, St John's Ambulance etc) events for supporters & fund raisers. NB 24 hour operation.

National Police Air Service (Afield chosen as key strategic location with ability to support the area in an arc between Southampton and Ipswich). NB 24 hour operation.

Specialist Aviation Services - company supplying / maintaining / servicing most UK Air Ambulance Helicopters

Events featuring historic aircraft

Events for Air Cadets / Royal Aeronautical Society / Young Eagles

Aero engineering apprenticeships

Other Police activities - e.g. dog handling (provides mutual benefit - security for airfield)

H&S filming / virtual reality

Service support companies - IT / Fire and Security / PR and Marketing / Accountancy / Chauffeur Vehicle hire

Appendix 4

Training Organisations and associated airfields

These are contained in two CAA documents:

- * CAA Standards Document 30: UK CAA Registered Training Facilities PPL Aeroplanes and Helicopters
- * CAA Standards Document 31: Organisations Conducting Approved Courses of Flight and Ground Training

The link to them is:

<http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?catid=1&pagetype=65&appid=11&mode=list&type=sercat&id=22>

Source:

Jim Marren
Manager: GA Pilot Training, Licensing & Policy
General Aviation Unit
Civil Aviation Authority

Appendix 5

British Microlight Aircraft Association

Airfield	Town/County	Post Code
St.Michaels Microlight Airfield	Lancashire	PR3 0RT
Sutton Meadows Airfield	Cambridgeshire	CB6 2BJ
Halfpenny Green	South Staffordshire	DY7 5DY
Kernan Tandragee	Armagh	BT62 2LA
Otherton Airfield	Staffordshire	ST19 5NX
Old Sarum	Wiltshire	SP4 6DZ
Sandown	Isle of Wight	PO36 0JP
Ince airfield	Merseyside	L38 1QA
North Weald Airfield	Essex	CM16 6HR
Beccles	Suffolk	NR34 7PJ
Strathaven Airfield	South Lanarkshire	ML10 6RW
Yatesbury Field	Wiltshire	SN11 8HS
Eaglescott Airfield	Devon	EX37 9LH
Leicester Airport	Leicester	LE2 2FG
Rochester Airport	Kent	ME5 9SD
Perth	Perth & Kinross	PH2 6PL
Headcorn	Kent	TN27 9HX
Beverley Airfield	East Yorkshire	HU17 5LT
Rufforth East	Suffolk	YO23 3QA
Sywell Aerodrome	Northampton	NN6 0BN
Popham	Hampshire	SO21 3BD
City Airport (Barton)	Manchester	M30 7SA
Eshott Airfield	Northumberland	NE65 9QJ
Carlisle Airport	Lancashire	CA6 4NW
Boston Aerodrome	Lincolnshire	PE21 7NY
Watnall	Nottinghamshire	NG16 1HW
Barton Aerodrome	Manchester	M30 7SA
Stoke Medway	Kent	ME3 9RN
Brown Shutters Farm Airfield	Avon	BA2 7NG
Chatteris	Cambridgeshire	PE15 0EA
Wickenby	Lincolnshire	LN3 5AX
Cardiff Airport	Vale of Glamorgan	CF62 3BD
Newtonards	County Down	BT23 8SG
Park Hall	Derbyshire	DE7 6DA
Caernarfon Airport	Gwynedd	LL54 5TP
Moss Edge Farm	Lancashire	LA2 0ER
Gransden	Cambridgeshire	SG19 3BP
Heathfield	Kent	TN21 0UG
Balado	Perth & Kinross	KY13 0RF
Membury Airfield	Berkshire	RG17 7TJ
Compton Abbas Airfield	Dorset	SP5 5AP
Northrepps Aerodrome	Norfolk	NR27 9LF
Deanland Airfield	West Sussex	BN8 6AR
Rossall Field	Lancashire	LA2 0ER
Durham Tees Valley Airport	Durham	DL2 1LU
Longside Airfield	Aberdeenshire	AB42 3DY

Appendix 6
British Gliding Association Airfields

BGA CLUBS	Site	Winch	Aerotow	Training
https://www.gliding.co.uk/club-finder				
Andreas Gliding Club	Andreas	y	n	y
Anglia Gliding Club	Wattisham mil	y	y	y
Banbury Gliding club	Hinton in the Hedges	n	y	y
Bannerdown Gliding Club	Keevil mil	y	y	y
Bath Wilts & North Dorset Gliding Club	The Park	y	y	y
Bicester Gliding Centre	Bicester	y	y	y
Bidford Gliding Centre	Bidford	n	y	y
Black Mountains Gliding Club	Talgarth	n	y	y
Bognor Regis GC	Bognor	n	y	n
Booker Gliding Club	Wycombe	n	y	y
Borders Gliding Club	Milfield	y	n	y
Bowland Forest Gliding Club	Chipping	y	y	y
Bristol & Gloucestershire Gliding Club	Nymphsfield	y	y	y
Buckminster Gliding Club	Saltby	y	y	y
Burn Gliding Club	Burn	y	y	y
Cairngorm Gliding Club	Feshiebridge	y	y	y
Cambridge Gliding Club	Gransden Lodge	y	y	y
Channel Gliding Club	Waldeshare Park	y	n	y
Connel Gliding Club (SLMG only)	Oban	n	n	y
Cotswold Gliding Club	Aston Down	y	y	y
Cranwell Gliding Club	Cranwell N mil	y	y	y
Darlton Gliding Club	Darlton	y	n	y
Dartmoor Gliding Society	Brent Tor	y	n	y
Deeside Gliding Club	Aboyne	n	y	y
Derby & Lancs Gliding Club	Camphill	y	n	y
Devon & Somerset Gliding Club	North Hill	y	y	y
Dorset Gliding Club	Eyres Field	y	y	y
Dumfries & District Gliding Club	Falgunzeon	y	n	y
East Sussex Gliding Club	Ringmere	y	y	y
Edensoaring Gliding Club	Skelling Farm	y	n	y
Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club	Wormingford	y	y	y
Essex Gliding Club	Ridgewell	y	y	y
Fenland Gliding Club	Marham mil	y	y	y
Fulmar Gliding Club	Easterton	y	y	y
Herefordshire Gliding Club	Shobden	n	y	y
Heron Gliding Club	Yeovilton mil	y	y	y
Highland Gliding Club	Easterton	y	y	y

Kent Gliding Club	Challock	y	y	y
Kestrel Gliding Club	Odiham mil	y	y	y
Lakes Gliding Club	Barrow / Walney Island	n	y	y
Lasham Gliding Society	Lasham	y	y	y
Lincolnshire Gliding Club	Strubby	y	n	y
London Gliding Club	Dunstable Downs	y	y	y
Mendip Gliding Club	Halesland	y	y	y
Midland Gliding Club	Long Mynd	y	y	y
MotorGlide	Long Marston	n	y	y
Nene Valley Gliding Club	Upwood	y	y	y
Norfolk Gliding Club	Tibenham	y	y	y
North Devon Gliding Club	Eaglescott	n	y	y
North Wales Gliding Club	Llantisilio	y	n	y
Northumbria Gliding Club	Currock Hill	y	y	y
Oxford Gliding Club	Weston on the Green	y	n	y
Oxfordshire Sportflying Club	Enstone	n	y	y
Peterborough & Spalding Gliding Club	Crowland	n	y	y
Portsmouth Naval GC	Lee on Solent	y	y	y
RAF GSA Centre Chiltern GC	Halton mil	y	y	y
Rattlesden Gliding Club	Rattlesden	y	y	y
Sackville Vintage GC	Sackville Farm	y	y	n
Scottish Gliding Union	Portmoak	y	y	y
Seahawk Gliding Club	Culdrose/Predannick mil	y	y	y
Shalbourne Soaring Society	Rivar Hill	y	n	y
Shenington Gliding Club	Edgehill	y	y	y
Shropshire Soaring Group	Sleap	n	y	y
South Wales Gliding Club	Usk	y	y	y
Southdown Gliding Club	Parham	y	y	y
Staffordshire Gliding Club	Seighford	n	y	y
Stratford On Avon Gliding Club	Snitterfield	y	n	y
Suffolk Soaring Club	Rougham	n	y	y
Surrey Hills Gliding Club	Kenley	y	n	y
The Gliding Centre	Husbands Bosworth	y	y	y
Trent Valley Gliding Club	Kirton in Lindsay	y	y	y
Ulster Gliding Club	Bellarena / Benone Strand	n	y	y
Upward Bound Trust Gliding Club	Aylesbury/Thame	y	y	y
Vale of White Horse Gliding Club	Sandhill Farm	n	y	y
Welland Gliding Club	Lyvedon	y	y	y
Wolds Gliding Club	Pocklington	y	y	y
Wrekin Gliding Club	Cosford mil	y	y	y
Wyvern Gliding Club	Upavon mil	y	y	y
York Gliding Centre	Rufforth	y	y	y
Yorkshire Gliding Club	Sutton Bank	y	y	y

Appendix 7

The British Model Flying Association

The active arm of the Society of Model Aeronautical Engineers Limited

Chacksfield House, 31 St Andrew's Road, Leicester, LE2 8RE

Locations vary with availability, which is gradually decreasing.

Membership is steady between 35,500 - 36,500. It is too early to assess how many members are now Drone pilots.

Appendix 8

Local airfields - are there different effects by gender if the network is lost?

There are many reasons why it is crucial to retain a network of smaller local airfields, but one factor not often considered is whether their loss is likely to have differential effects by gender, leading to increased adverse effects on Britain's future pilot pool.

There is a predicted global shortage of 550,000 pilots over the next 20 years, as well as around 650,000 engineers and other related professionals. It is therefore crucial that we do, now, all we can to encourage more potential pilots, including the targeting of under-represented sectors of the population. One significantly under-represented group is females; overall, the proportion of female pilots in the UK has remained around the six percent figure for many years and is not yet shifting significantly.

The British Women Pilots' Association (BWPA) was formed in 1955, many of its founders being ex-Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) pilots who were, as women, unable to find the aviation work they wanted post-war. Since then, the BWPA has often asked the question 'Why are there not more women pilots?' It certainly isn't innate lack of skills or ability, as those women ATA pilots and many women since, have amply demonstrated. And it is a question we are still asking, for example when visiting schools and other groups, as a part of the recent and ongoing BWPA STEM initiative. And one factor which stands out very clearly is that many girls are still heavily discouraged by school careers advisors, their families, and cultural stereotypes; being a pilot is often simply not perceived as a job for a woman, or something which a woman can do, and girls are *still* being told this. It is hard to get figures on these negative attitudes, but those of us involved have all heard such things said, many times. Unbelievable these days perhaps, but true. Whereas for boys, the advice they are given is usually very, very different.

Therefore girls and young women often don't even think about learning to fly until they are older. Their first realisation that women can be pilots, and that they too could fly, frequently comes about through contact with a small local airfield in their neighbourhood. Perhaps they meet or know someone learning to fly there, or see the aeroplanes or gliders in the sky near their homes. Or they may attend an airfield open event for local people or, at least until recently perhaps see a local air show. We in the BWPA are aware of many women who first realised that they could indeed learn to fly via initial contact with a local airfield, and went on to gain their first flying qualifications. And a notable proportion of these women went further and obtained commercial licences. Without the facility of a local airfield it is highly likely that most of these women would never have even believed that they could become pilots, let alone commercially qualified.

It is of course true that there are also boys who start their flying this way but, although with the current lack of hard data it is difficult to prove, from our experience in the BWPA and as pilots we believe that a reduction in the local airfield network would adversely affect women in realising that they too could fly - and eventually become pilots - to a greater degree than the effect on men. And with the upcoming pilot shortage we, as a nation and especially in a changing world with such a huge pilot shortage forecast, cannot afford to lose any potential aviation professionals. And this would undoubtedly be the case if we lost our local airfield network.

Professor Marion Wooldridge

Deputy Chair and Scholarship Co-ordinator - British Women Pilots' Association
Honourable Company of Air Pilots - Assistant to the Court
Air Pilots Trust - Trustee

Appendix 9

How green is your airfield?

<http://www.gaac.org.uk/wordpress/habitat/how-green-is-your-airfield/>

We believe this study identifies the key principles and they still apply however, please note it is our intention to produce a revised edition of through a joint study with the RSPB and CPRE when time permits.