

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON GENERAL AVIATION (APPG GA) AIRFIELDS WORKING GROUP PROGRAMME 2019-2020

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG GA) addresses issues that can directly or indirectly contribute to the growth and success of General Aviation in the UK. This paper describes the APPG GA Airfields Working Group Programme and will be amended from time to time as agreed by the Sectoral Chair in consultation with the APPG GA executive.

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1. OVERVIEW

The Airfields Working Group has been established to directly address the issues surrounding the decline of General Aviation airfields across the country. In particular, the number of airfields licenced by the Civil Aviation Authority has dramatically declined over recent years to around 100 today. However the APPG's concerns are not limited to just licenced airfields, but airfields of all types. The working group believes that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides little assistance to maintain the airfields that continue to exist, and indeed many of those are under threat of closure. New airfields are never built, therefore once an airfield closes it is gone forever.

As a sector, General Aviation directly provides £3bn of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy every year. It also employs more than 38,000 people largely in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) roles, and it provides the foundation for the much broader £53bn UK aviation sector.

With airfields currently classified as brownfield land, there is irrefutable evidence that Local Planning Authorities see any airfield site in its entirety as suitable for development. In Surrey, every licenced airfield is under threat, in Hertfordshire there is only one remaining licenced airfield, and in 22 counties across the UK there are no licenced airfields whatsoever. Protection for airfields in the NPPF and other related planning guidance cannot be deemed as either appropriate or effective as it currently stands.

The Airfields Working Group is therefore of the view that a strategically important part of our national transport infrastructure is fighting for its survival. The group, and the APPG more widely, fully supports the Government's stated policy of making the UK the best country in the world for General Aviation. The group will therefore be urging Government to introduce immediate changes to the NPPF, and encourage departments across Whitehall to work together to protect the critical network of General Aviation airfields.

2. KEY ISSUES

There are a number of significant issues that need to be addressed by the Airfields Working Group. These include;

a. Protection of UK airfields

Airfields are limited national asset. There are currently around 100 licenced airfields, along with unlicensed airfields, farmers' strips and other types of airfields, available to General Aviation traffic. This number has declined over recent years and continues to do so. Airfields are closing at an alarming rate, mostly due to pressures from developers and local authorities as airfields are classified as brownfield land. It is clear to the APPG that planning policy guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government needs to be strengthened, and one of the key priorities of the Airfields Working Group is to advocate the necessary changes that need to be made to planning policy. Current planning guidance makes it impossible for airfields to be protected, and the Airfields Working Group will be doing detailed work on what needs to change.

Key policy publications relating to airfields include;

- i. National Planning Policy Framework
- ii. Aviation Policy Framework
- iii. The General Aviation Strategy
- iv. Transport evidence bases in plan making and decision taking

b. Strategic network of airfields

The Department for Transport (DfT), the sponsoring department for General Aviation, has recently appointed Byron Davies as the Government's first ever General Aviation Champion. Subsequently, the DfT has launched a review of what the UK's strategic network of airfields is. This is being conducted by York Aviation, specialist aviation consultants, and is due to report back later this year. In advance of the review concluding, the Airfields Working Group will be conducting its own inquiry into such a strategic network, and submitting recommendations to the DfT on what this network should look like. As part of this work, the Airfields Working Group will consider whether a strategic network could have a negative impact on those airfields not included in the network.

c. Military aerodromes

A number of aerodromes currently owned and operated by the Ministry of Defence will over the coming years be decommissioned and sold to interested parties. Therefore the future of these aerodromes is uncertain, and the Airfields Working Group will be seeking to ensure that protections are put in place to ensure a continued aviation use at these aerodromes where it is practicable to do so.

3. ROLE

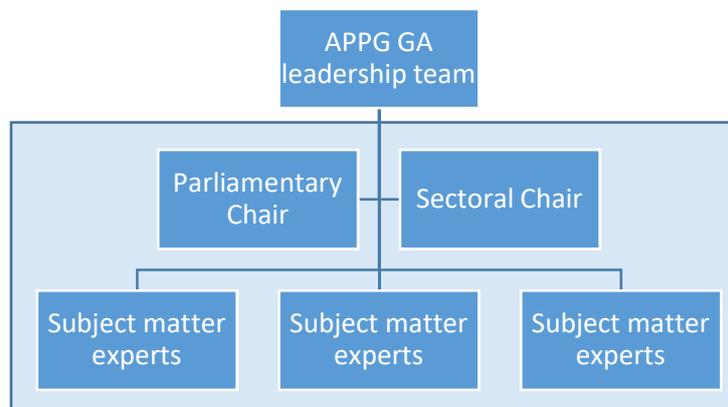
The Airfields Working Group will identify issues that impact on the sustainability and growth of GA, and in particular issues that lead to the closure of airfields. In doing so, the working group expects to;

- 1) Consider the needs of all aspects of aviation
- 2) Liaise with all elements of General Aviation to ensure a balanced view is delivered to Government

- 3) Ensure that the Department of Transport, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Defence, other Government departments and Parliament are clear about the problems facing General Aviation and suggested solutions
- 4) Identify research to aid Parliament in considering issues related to GA and airfields, including concerns around protection for airfields
- 5) Consider the terms of reference for holding Parliamentary Inquires into the threat to General Aviation airfields

4. GOVERNANCE

The Airfields Working Group provides the APPG's executive with support on matters relating to airfields. The working group has a Parliamentary Chair, a Sectoral Chair and co-opted advisers who are experts on the subject matter. The Sector Chair reports to the APPG's leadership team.



The Airfields Working Group will communicate by email, phone and occasional meetings. The Sector Chair will periodically report to the leadership team as agreed from time to time. The membership of the group is outlined below.

Name	Organisation	Role
Luke Pollard MP	APPG	Parliamentary Chair
John Gilder	GAAC	Sectoral Chair
Matthew Bolshaw	APPG	
John Walker	AOPA	
Geoff Weighell	BMAA	
Steve Slater	LAA	
Marion Wooldridge	BWPA	
Ann Bartaby		
John Steel QC	The Air League	
Pauline Vahey	AOPA	
Louise Southern	SkyDemon	
Marc Bailey	BBGA	

5. WORK PROGRAMME

During 2019 and 2020, the Airfields Working Group will;

- a. Identify specific issues relating to airfields with supporting evidence
- b. Propose solutions to those issues
- c. Engage effectively with Parliamentarians (under an agreed plan) to achieve results, including;
 - I. Debate concerns on the floor of both houses
 - II. Table questions for oral and/or written answer
 - III. Table motions in the House of Commons
 - IV. Table and debate amendments to Bills
 - V. Suggest attendees at select committees
- d. Provide periodic updates to inform and advise Parliamentarians and others of progress or otherwise
- e. Arrange meetings with ministers (or officials as appropriate, with agreement from the relevant minister)
- f. Arrange meetings with relevant stakeholders such as sector regulators and other authorities

6. COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PRESS

The work of the group will be communicated as effectively as possible through the APPG executive. The APPG's website will reflect the importance of its work on airfields and highlight the main issues.

7. TIME TABLE

The work programme will take place in alignment with parliamentary activity/opportunity as well as developments related to;

- The Aviation Strategy 2050
- Specific developments related to airfields of national importance such as Shoreham, Wellesbourne and Fair Oaks

During 2019 and 2020 the Airfields Working Group objectives will be:

1. To preserve airfields under threat which are important to the network which serves General Aviation.
2. To influence the guidance on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure planning policy reflects the importance of preserving GA airfields to the national interest.
3. Campaign for ex-military aerodromes to be retained for civilian usage as part of the UK network of GA airfields.
4. Work with the CAA to improve the number of GNSS approaches available at UK aerodromes.