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## Education Pack

# 1. Introduction

Firstly, thank you for taking action for General Aviation by downloading this education pack. This guide will provide you with all the information and tools you need to ask your local MP to stand up for General Aviation and encourage Government to take action.

We want MPs across the country to understand the essential role General Aviation plays in our economy. General Aviation directly supports up to 40,000 high skilled jobs<sup>1</sup> and is essential for the success of the broader £60.6bn aviation industry. Just as importantly, the sector helps inspire people to literally reach for the skies by promoting the development of all-important Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths skills; known as STEM.

Sadly, a lack of understanding about the pivotal role that General Aviation plays in our economy has led to poor and misguided policy towards General Aviation by successive governments. This is putting the entire future of our world-beating £60.6bn aviation industry at serious risk; just at a time when we need high-tech jobs and skills to compete globally post-Brexit.

Ensuring that Britain is a global leader in aviation starts on the ground. We need to ensure that the country's smaller airfields – which face an unprecedented threat – are saved for our nation's future. But as demand for land continues to rise, planning regulations have allowed airfields, in all parts of the country, to be considered open for development. Yet with nearly all our 100+ licenced airfields in the UK having been created during wartime, each one closed is never again replaced. In short, we have a diminishing aviation asset as a nation, it is time to put a stop to these closures in order that we can help provide the kind of high-skill jobs and growth that this country requires in the future.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation is one of the largest in the current Parliament. It has 150 Parliamentarians as members from across all parties and both Houses of Parliament, and this number is still rising. The education pack is here to help you explain the General Aviation facts to your MP. A great outcome would be for them to agree to join the All-Party Parliamentary Group in order to lend their support to this important job-creating sector.

## General aviation: why it matters

General aviation, that is to say, civil flying by pilots, training, air shows and related recreational and business activities, is vitally important to the UK. Not only does it produce a Gross Value Added of £3 billion<sup>2</sup> to the economy and support nearly 40,000 jobs, but it also sustains a whole substrate of qualified engineers, flying instructors, and, of course, pilots, many of whom go on to roles in the military or the broader £60.6bn aviation industry. Without its network of airfields, the general aviation industry would be lost in the UK forever.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-economic-value>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-economic-value>

## What we want to achieve

Our main priority is to safeguard Britain's network of airfields, large and small. The majority are profitable and are run privately by their owners for all manner of activities, from commercial passenger and freight flights to aviation-related sports and other recreational activities. They usually accommodate on site a healthy population of flying schools, workshops and other businesses that serve the aviation community, providing skilled jobs in education, engineering and often military training.

In the railway sector, the closure of a station would be a national issue, not just a debate for the local community. Likewise, we believe that under the guise of local planning, the Government's advice through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) ignores the national implications of closing down parts of a highly dynamic transport network which, if kept alive, will play a huge part in our economic future.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation is not campaigning for money. We are asking for general aviation to be treated fairly as part of the wider economy, asking the Government to eliminate the disparities in treatment compared to similar enterprises, from the presumption that "brownfield" airfields should be developed for other uses, to unfair taxation on aviation training and high duties on aviation fuels, for which the sector receives nothing in return.

Finally, given that the Government has already committed to making "the UK the best country in the world for General Aviation", we want to support the Government's own ambition by ensuring action is taking today.



The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation

## 2. Taking action: Educating your MP

### ➤ Who is my MP?

You can find out who your local MP is by going to the House of Commons website and entering your postcode. Please visit: [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps)  
You can also find the name of your MP by calling the House of Commons enquiry service on 020 7219 4272.

### ➤ Arrange a meeting with your MP

All MPs hold regular surgeries where constituents can meet and discuss issues of concern on a one-to-one basis. Details of these surgeries can usually be found on your MP's website, but in order to ensure you get an appointment please either call, phone or email with the specific request of attending a surgery.

MPs have a duty to meet with their constituents, but due to time pressures some will try to deal with you by letter or email. Please do not take no for an answer. Whatever an MP says, you can always make a greater impression in person than in writing. Please therefore ensure that you are provided with an appointment to meet with your MP in person.

During your meeting be clear and concise. Tell them why general aviation is important to you and your MP's area. Be prepared to summarise the issue and your request in just 5 minutes.

#### **Tips for meeting your MP:**

- **Be presentable and be punctual**, but be aware that MPs can often get delayed and it will be a good idea to work out how much time your MP has at the start of the meeting, and have your most important points prepared.
- **Be polite**. Aim for friendly discussion – it will help you achieve your goal. If your MP tries to change the subject at any point, you can respond politely by saying: "I know your time is limited – what I really came to talk about is..."
- **Be well prepared and make it personal**. Explain why you're there and why you care.
- **Remember you're not expected to be an expert**. If your MP asks a question you can't answer, say so and offer to get back to them. Similarly, your MP will most likely not be an expert in General Aviation, so be informative, brief and ask him or her to take action on your behalf.
- It can help to **meet your MP in a small delegation** (if you happen to know other aviators in your area), where a couple of people can present the facts and another can take notes. It is really important that you make a note of what your MP says – this will enable you to follow up on any promises that were made.
- Make sure to grab a photo – share it with your flying friends, the local press and on social media.
- Don't just ask them for support – ask them to take action!

**Give your MP the following 5 options showing how they can support the campaign. Ideally ask them to do all five...**

- 1 Ask your MP to join the All-Party Parliamentary Group for General Aviation.**  
If he or she is not already a member, then their support in joining the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on General Aviation would be most welcome. Only back-benchers may join, but it's open to MPs from all parties.
- 2 Write to the Chancellor calling for the tax on Avgas to be cut.**  
While car fuel duty helps maintain our roads, the Treasury makes no contribution whatsoever to the upkeep of airfields or any other aspect of General Aviation, yet charges a level of tax far higher than Ordinary unleaded – 95 RON. The tax on Avgas is effectively a tax on learning to fly
- 3 Write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, calling for pilot training to be given NARIC accreditation and VAT rates to be brought into line with other UK education programmes.**
- 4 Write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to call for amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework concerning airfields**
- 5 Write to the Secretary of State for Transport calling for his department to deliver on its pledge to make the UK the world's best nation for General Aviation**

**You can also consider:**

- **Inviting your MP to your local airfield**  
If you're an aviator yourself, it might be an idea to invite your MP to the airfield you use. You could show them around, visit any flying schools on-site or even, if you offer, they might be persuaded to come with you on a short flight. Showing your MP how the local airfield helps inspire people (especially youngsters) will go a long way to gaining their support. Remember to set up this kind of visit in conjunction with the airfield operator so that it doesn't take them by surprise to have their MP turn up.
- **Writing to your local paper and post on local Facebook groups**  
If you have written to or better still met with your local MP to ask them to support general aviation, write to your local paper to let them know.

You can use the GA Facts sheet to back up your points and make your message clear. Remember that MPs will also be interested in the local perspective of their constituency and how local residents are affected. Be prepared therefore to talk about the issues as they relate to your area – why, for example, is general aviation important not just to regional infrastructure but also to nationwide transport networks? How many young people do you know who would be interested in engineering or piloting jobs relating to aviation? Where will RAF and commercial pilots train without general aviation airfields? Be aware of noise concerns and work to ensure that those who are not keen on their local airfield get to see the benefits too.

➤ **What next?**

Congratulations! You've taken action in the fight for general aviation. Next up...

1. Let us know how it went by visiting [www.GeneralAviationAPPG.uk](http://www.GeneralAviationAPPG.uk) and tweet about your visit to your MP @GA\_APPG  
Your news could help inspire someone else to take action.
2. Follow-up with your local MP to say thank you.
3. In time the various ministers will respond to the letters from your MP. Please ensure you keep track of this and if you haven't heard within 4 weeks, then give your MP a prod to say that you're still awaiting a ministerial response.

**You have real power**

The UK is a democracy so your MP should care about your voice as a constituent and want to hear your views. You really do have the power to influence them.

**It benefits MPs too**

MPs are always keen on positive media coverage, and supporting this campaign helps them get it. In turn, this will help them raise their own profile, supporting a local and national issue that many may not even be aware of.

**It gets results**

Research has shown that MPs believe constituency contact to be more effective than purely lobbying at Westminster. If enough MPs support something across the House, the Government will act. General Aviation has traditionally been very poor at ensuring that Members of Parliament and government ministers are aware of aviation concerns. They may not be aware that General Aviation supports tens of thousands of jobs and represents a crucial part of our nation's economic success in the future. Thanks to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation this is finally changing, but your support is needed too.

### 3. Who do we need to convince?

#### **The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP: Chancellor of the Exchequer**

As the man in charge of the Treasury, there is not a lot we would ask of the Chancellor, since general aviation is in most cases self-supporting and a successful private industry.

However, we do feel that certain taxes levied, especially on AvGas and on flight training, ought to be revised and revisited, since they are unfairly high in comparison to fuel and training in other sectors. The current tax regime is economically damaging to the UK's part in helping to train the 600,000 pilots expected to be needed globally in the years ahead.

#### **The Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP: Secretary of State for Transport**

Chris Grayling is in charge of the transport portfolio for the Government. Although his department has made efforts to understand and accommodate complaints over the decline of general aviation airfields, it lacks a specific understanding of the situation. Ideally we want the department to start treating airfields as a national infrastructure issue. They are the sponsoring department for General Aviation, but over the years successive governments have failed to take this responsibility seriously.

Once again, general aviation is not asking for money, but merely to be put at parity with other transport infrastructure such as railways, whose station closures affect far more than just local communities.

#### **The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP: Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government**

Sajid Javid heads the department responsible for overseeing local authority and council activity in the UK. This is especially important to general aviation and to airfields with respect to planning laws and housing development proposals.

The current law states that airfields are to be treated as brownfield land and that councils should operate with a presumption in favour of development of that land. We believe that this guidance is incorrect and that airfields, as nationally significant infrastructure, should have their status within the planning laws changed to reflect their importance in sustaining the health of the British economy.

We also believe that the department should draft advice to planning authorities across the country to make it easier to open new airfields, assuming all other procedures are followed correctly.

## 4. GA Fact Sheet

### ➤ How many airfields are closing?

The Department for Transport General Aviation Strategy 2015 provides the following table (Page 29, Table 1):

Number of CAA Licensed Aerodromes 2008-2014							
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number	144	144	138	134	129	128	124

However, in just two years since, the following airfields have either been closed or are threatened with immediate closure:

Andrewsfield	Blackpool	Bourn	Deenethorpe	Dunsfold
Elvington	Halfpenny Green	Kemble	Long Marston	Manston
Alcombury	Molesworth	Mildenhall	Chalgrove	Colerne
RAF Henlow	RAF Hullavington	RAF Wyton	RAF Wethersfield	RMB Chivenor
Linton-on-Ouse	RAF Topcliffe	Nottingham City	Old Sarum	Panshanger
Peterborough	Plymouth	Redhill	Rochester	Wellesbourne
Wycombe Air Park	Fairoaks	North Danes	Tollerton	

The above closure list represents **over a quarter of licensed airfields shown in the 2014 figure**. In addition, these do not include the very latest MoD announcement of a further 30+ sites to be sold (among which are airfields such as Abingdon).

Moreover, simple arithmetic works out that airfields are closing at an average rate of 3 per year. If this continues, there will be zero left by 2056.

- **The Government taxes a full 20% from VAT on flying schools, unlike all other types of education.**
- **Airfields are classified as brownfield sites in the National Planning Policy Framework.**
- **Aviation gasoline is taxed at a duty rate of 37p per litre, only 20p less than petrol yet, unlike with the roads and highways, the Government does not own or maintain any airfields with this money.**



## 5. Resources

Below are some quotes from industry and business that you can use to show the campaign has broad support.

### ➤ **Virgin Atlantic**

*"General Aviation plays an important role in maintaining a supply chain of pilots to commercial aviation. The UK is fortunate to have some of the best pilots in the world and it is vital that this route of learning to fly is not shut off for future generations by the closure of small airfields."*

### ➤ **Rolls Royce**

*"At Rolls-Royce we want the next generation to be inspired by the magic of aviation and hope that this will encourage them to become the pilots, ground crew and engineers of the future. General Aviation is part of the lifeblood of the aviation industry, helping to create the passion which keeps our industry alive and growing. We feel that General Aviation should be encouraged as it contributes to the sustainment and growth of the aviation industry, in which we are a key player."*

### ➤ **BAE Systems**

*"Most (if not all) aircrew individuals who help conceive, design, build, test and ultimately operate UK's airborne defence capability point to their genesis from within the GA community. Drawing on the thick seam of talent that continues to flourish within GA circles, ensures that the UK armed forces and UK industry can attract and benefit from those individuals who can already demonstrate the airborne resourcefulness, aptitude and endeavour required. This not only reduces risk but importantly, financial strain. It is therefore imperative for UK GA to be recognised as a key enabler to our future sovereign wealth and prosperity; bringing together the positive elements of air-mindedness with the demanding high standards of technical knowledge and learning. Put simply, GA continues to inspire a nation!"*

Website: [www.GeneralAviationAPPG.uk](http://www.GeneralAviationAPPG.uk)