



Department for Transport

Matthew Bolshaw
External Liaison Officer
APPG on General Aviation
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
Paul Maynard MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: paul.maynard@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear Matthew,

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to thank you for your letter of Friday 26 July 2019, on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on General Aviation (GA), congratulating him on his appointment.

GA creates highly skilled jobs and promotes wider economic growth in aviation. This department is committed to championing aviation, including GA and delivering a more dynamic and green aviation sector in all its forms.

The APPG's five-point plan covers: airfield protection; airspace reform; regulatory flexibility; lower taxation; and Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) approaches. This department is considering a wide range of policy options, including the ones in your plan, which will support GA. I look forward to making rapid progress in the coming days and weeks.

Airfield protection

Airfield protection is one of our highest priorities for GA and I understand the strategic importance of airfields. The department has published and sought views on the recommendations of the former GA Champion on the safeguarding of aerodromes. My officials are currently working on proposals for consultation with the GA community and will work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to identify and implement an appropriate solution to this important issue.

Airspace reform

This department is committed to responding to the Kirkhope Inquiry, and I am considering advice on this at the moment. As you know, the department has already commissioned NERL (through the Airspace Change Organising Group, ACOG) to produce a masterplan for airspace modernisation in the UK. The objectives of this masterplan include identifying where controlled airspace can be released back to the GA community. The department has also proposed taking legislative powers to compel the delivery of changes set out in the masterplan, to ensure the plan is delivered in full. This is particularly pertinent where airspace changes benefit a wide community but require an airport to bring forward an airspace change.

Regulatory flexibility

I recognise the need for regulatory flexibility and that the needs of GA differ from commercial aviation. The recently initiated GA safety review will assess the current level of risk to all parties; map out the current regulatory framework; assess the coherence of the regulatory framework; compare the UK system with other international partners; make recommendations to ensure the regulatory system is fit for purpose and proportionate; and compare GA to other recreational activities. This will, I believe, provide a much needed baseline which will allow the department and the CAA to look at where greater deregulation and delegation may be appropriate. I look forward to the APPG on GA contributing its wisdom to the work of this important review.

I am also considering what opportunities may be presented by Brexit, and will consider whether a further red tape challenge for GA post Brexit is worth taking forward.

Lower taxation

This Department has been working with HM Treasury to look at the current tax treatment of issues relating to the GA sector, including VAT on pilot training and fuel. The Secretary of State shall be writing imminently to the Chancellor of the Exchequer setting out his views on these issues, ahead of this Government's first fiscal event.

GNSS approaches

I recognise the importance of GNSS approaches and the need to expedite work in this area. The Secretary of State plans to raise the matter with the CAA in his introductory meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive, to explore what more can be done to get this back on track.

Model aircraft and drones

You also raised in your letter the impact of legislation and registration on the model aircraft flying community. I very much recognise the strong safety culture fostered by the majority of model aircraft flyers and clubs, and acknowledge their concern about how the exponential rise of drone use in the UK may impact on their own operations. This is something the department will look at closely.

In its response to the 2018 consultation on 'Taking Flight: The Future of Drones in the UK', the Government recognised the benefits to young people of piloting unmanned aircraft, particularly through the introduction of STEM related skills and I am keen that this valuable activity continues.

I look forward to discussing these and other matters with the APPG's new Chair when he or she has been elected.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Maynard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

PAUL MAYNARD