



House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Chair: Steve Double MP | President: Sir Roger Gale MP | Ambassador: Carol Vorderman, MBE

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament Street
London, SW1A 2BQ

17th July 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Creation of a National Register of Historic Aircraft

As members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation (APPG-GA), we are concerned that more needs to be done to safeguard the remaining physical examples of the UK's important aviation heritage.

British designed and manufactured aircraft were at the forefront of technical innovation in the air for much of the Twentieth century. Iconic British types played pivotal roles in our national survival, and to this day provide a source of education and inspiration for the British public. Some aircraft have gone as far as holding a key place in our national identity.

Currently, historic aircraft are maintained by a mixture of private and public sector museums, charitable and voluntary organisations, commercial corporations and individuals. These aircraft are inherently vulnerable as the need for lightness means that construction materials are used sparingly and often in structurally complex ways. This means historic aircraft present a demanding task to maintain either as flying examples or preserved as non-flying examples on the ground. Stewardship of a historic aircraft type requires a high level of commitment, skill and resource without which examples quickly fall into disrepair.

Yet, despite this vulnerability, there is limited national oversight of these important historic aircraft. Rare examples are left unmonitored and free to be sold or scrapped without reference to their cultural value. The net result is the steady decrease in public accessibility and loss of collective knowledge about our history.

This situation is in stark contrast with other heritage transport sectors. DCMS sponsors organisations such as the National Historic Ships and the UK National Historic Rail Collection to make sure examples of historically important maritime craft and trains are preserved as part of the national memory. It is now time to extend the same protection to the heritage aircraft that survive across the UK.

The APPG-GA's dedicated Heritage Working Group, which includes many of the leading experts in the UK's heritage aviation sector, have produced a report which makes the case in detail for a management system for important aircraft similar to the National Historic Ships model, which is a proven success. A copy of their report is enclosed with this letter.

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Creating new measures to preserve the UK's unique aircraft heritage has become even more urgent as many private museums and collections face financial hardship caused by COVID-19 measures. We therefore invite you and your officials to meet with representatives of the APPG-GA's Heritage Working Group at your earliest convenience to discuss the proposals outlined in their report.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Davies of Gower
Sir Roger Gale MP
Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate
Robert Courts MP
David Jones MP
Baroness McGregor-Smith
Lord Rana
Lord Campbell of Pittenweem
Lord Craig of Radley
Baron Rowe-Beddoe
Mark Garnier MP
Lord Fellowes of West Stafford
Martin Vickers MP
Lord Jones of Cheltenham
Lord McNally
Lord Geidt
James Gray MP
Ian Paisley MP
Lord Naseby
Lord Saville
Mark Menzies MP
Lord Selkirk of Douglas
Sammy Wilson MP
Lord Stoddart of Swindon
The Earl of Stair
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Lord Soley

CC - Nigel Huddleston MP - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage)

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