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CLUB BULLETIN 90: 2/2000

This monthly bulletin is aimed mainly at club contacts/secretaries. It usually covers administrative topics and news from the Executive Council. General interest items are repeated in Skywings magazine for the information of all members.

If you require further information on these items please contact:

1: Technical Manual

Mark Dale
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Technical Manual Amendment A-05 (dated 29th July 1999). Unfortunately an internal discussion proposal has been included in the amendment in error.

Section 3, Chapter 2, Page 10: 3.2.8.Licence Validity: Annual renewal, 2. The sentence in the second set of brackets (an instructor is required to complete a minimum of 25 instructional days per year) should be deleted. This deletion will be formalised in the next set of amendments.

The FSC apologises for any confusion caused, and thanks the instructor who noticed this and queried it.

2: Membership Books

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There have been one or two misunderstandings in regard to the use of the new Introductory Membership Books. Would schools please note:

New Annual and Training membership fees (not IICF) must be submitted with the membership application forms. Membership application forms should be sent in when they have been used, not held over until the full book is returned.

All IICF payments (for Annual, Training and Day Memberships) must be sent in when the Membership Book is returned.

Membership forms in the books must not be used for renewals or upgrades, otherwise they will require IICF payments.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the office.

3: Club Insurance

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With the recent increases in subscriptions it is clear that a number of pilots are considering allowing their BHPA membership to lapse. Clubs should remember that it is a term of the insurance which covers both the clubs and their officers, that all club members should hold BHPA membership.

Clubs which knowlingly accept as members, pilots who do not hold BHPA membership may be putting themselves at risk in the event that a claim is made against your club or officials.

Continued.....

4: Privatisation of NATS

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The Bill proposing privatisation of NATS (National Air Traffic Services) was recently discussed in the House of Commons. The proposal is to sell off 46% to the private sector and 5% to employees. With the number of passengers estimated to double in the next twelve years (according to the Today programme, 17/2/00, BBC Radio 4) there is a real concern that in private hands too much emphasis will be put onto profits, not safety. The impact on restricted airspace for recreational users - that includes us - could be catastrophic, as one way of alleviating the profit/safety equation could be to extend controlled/restricted airspace.

Below is copied a comprehensive assessment written by BHPA Airspace Officer Tom Hardie outlining the salient points. Please take the time to write to your local MP to protest against privatisation of NATS. The more letters that are received by the House of Commons the greater the impact. It is important that you write your letter in your own words, as duplicate pro forma letters, or letters signed by lots of people carry far less weight. Please also ask all your local club members and pilots to do the same.

Together, if we make a concerted effort, we might be able to influence the outcome.

1. That the currently established demonstrably independent position, powers and boundaries of the Directorate of Airspace Policy (DAP) be retained. This is the current mechanism to protect the UKs long established equality of access philosophy on airspace design and management, it could also be called a right to roam safety philosophy within a structure of airspace sharing.

1.1 Were NATS to be a privatised company we believe it would be inappropriate for NATS personnel to be seconded to DAP (as currently happens) with the potential for conflicts of interest whilst with DAP, with respect to their future careers within NATS.

2. There is a legal obligation on all pilots to be adequately briefed prior to take off and the sole definitive source of the necessary data is the Aeronautical Information Service (AIS). AIS is currently part of NATS. We believe that it is not right for such a unique monopoly to be granted to a private company with powers of price setting to meet unfettered costs.

3. What safeguards will be in place to prevent a company with a strong airline interest taking an effectively controlling stake in NATS?

3.1 Obviously the same threat could come from a group of companies, be they airlines or other related interests, with similar aims.

4. What mechanisms will there be to ensure that NATS makes best use of the controlled airspace and does not prejudice the current equitable allocation of airspace?

4.1 Within any air traffic control system one of its largest controllable costs is its salary bill for controllers. In broad terms the further apart aircraft are kept the fewer controllers needed to effect control. Therefore the more controlled airspace that there is, for a given amount of air traffic, the fewer controllers that are needed and hence the lower the salary bill to set against the income generated by that amount of air traffic.

4.2 We understand that it will be a function of DAP to monitor the efficient use of airspace, yet as currently established the DAP has no powers that it can use to enforce any of its decisions. Unless DAP has a method of exercising control over NATS, probably by being in a position to prevent NATS from receiving payments, it will be a toothless tiger.

Enclosed: Minutes of Exec Meeting 99F 4 December 1999
Minutes of Annual General Meeting 4 December 1999

Distribution: Club contacts/secretaries, Executive Council and sub-committee members, BHPA Officers

Copy: This Bulletin is published monthly. If you have any items you wish to be included please send to Jennie at BHPA Office by 1st of the month.