

SPEECH Sir John Allison

Being President was not in my life plan. I never even served on the Board previously, nor aspired to do so. When Peter Saundby recruited me to be the UK National Delegate in 2000 he sold it to me on the basis that I would only have to come to 2 meetings a year, take part in the debate, vote if required and write a short report for the Royal Aero Club. Also, it was a nice club to belong to, full of interesting, like-minded people.

That was a pretty accurate sales pitch, because that is how things were in 2000. The external environment is completely different and infinitely more hostile now. The problem is that the organisation has not adjusted and is in some ways and in some parts still caught up in the same comfortable time warp.

I did not fully appreciate the many problems that we face until I became President, because unless you are on the Board, you do not have full visibility.

A President's job, as I see it, is strategic direction internally and effective representation externally. My main purpose in this report is to share with you my perception of what needs improvement in the organisation, and my vision of how to set about reform.

The problem with concentrating on what needs to be improved, is that there is a risk of presenting too negative a picture. Therefore, to put in some balance, I would just like to draw attention to successes – areas where we have had a beneficial influence.

- We have developed good relations with key senior EASA officials, and EASA has been responding positively and sympathetically to our concerns and accepting our proposals. A feature of this contact has been effective joint working with the EGU.
- In EASA Licensing & Ops, EASA opinion substantially reflected EAS' input. The outcome is still subject to political process. But a major success, so far.
- In EASA Part M, we have again had a big influence in the response to consultation and RIA. The output is awaited, but the signs are that this matter is far from over.
- In Eurocontrol we initially missed out by failing to secure a seat on the ICB, but we have staged a good recovery. We presented the air sports case to Chairman of ICB and have established personal contact with Airspace User Group which has seats at ICB. We are now included as observers.
- We played our part in all the key airspace debates, on airspace charging, 8.33 radios, Mode S and on the SES airspace structure. The recent EC announcement that FL'Z' would be on back burner for foreseeable future was a real success to which we contributed.
- EC Insurance regulation, finalised last year, was a relative success, compared with where the draft legislation started from in terms of coarse weight categories and indemnity limits.

- The outcome of the EC Driving Licenses / Trailers issue was a success, demonstrating the value of using the EU Office of German Sport. We found allies in Caravaners! Result was very acceptable for those air sports people who tow trailers.

I am not claiming that advances in any of these areas was solely due to the efforts of EAS, only that we played our part with other organisations. That is actually how the work has to be done.

There are also things where we have not done well. They mostly concern communication:

- First, it is a matter of great regret that our relationship with Michael Paul did not work out.
- Second, we have not been effective in explaining to our members and supporters what we are doing
- Third, the web site has been offline for a long time, partly for technical reasons

All these issues are inter-related and they all come down to too few people desperately fire-fighting on the immediate and essential issues and no capacity for anything else. Improvements to all are in hand.

This brings me neatly to my analysis of our problems and shortcomings:

- We have insufficient money
- We have too few active people
- A structure founded in the Aero Clubs does not reflect the entire scene
- We do not have all necessary cooperative processes with allies and potential allies in place
- The Board is too remote and its workings are opaque to the members
- Our communications are ineffective and, moreover, the web site has been down for a long time
- We lack lobbying skills
- We lack expert legal advice on Community law

Money

The reason we are trying to squeeze two meetings into one is because we cannot afford two meetings

Representation is expensive. Travel and subsistence costs are rising as level of activity increases. It is ridiculous to be taking on the combined might of the Commission, EASA and Eurocontrol without paid staff. We have only been able to employ one part-time consultant, and that only thanks to the generosity of the EGU, EHPU, the DaeC and the RaeC

We claim to represent 700,000 aviators. I realise that is only a headline number and that needs within the overall community (and the case for paying)

varies greatly. However, it serves to illustrate my general point. Our subscription revenue is forecast to be some €115,000 this year, i.e. about 16 cents per person represented. We are giving fantastic value for money because a small group of people are giving a huge chunk of their lives to this FOC. However, it is not sustainable. If we could receive just one Euro, or even 50 cents, per person represented, we could do this properly.

So I want national delegates to take the message back to their clubs that in future we need at least three times what is being paid today. I do not accept that is not possible. The people we are trying to help are all wealthy enough to pay for their flying activity. They can afford to give us the price of a cup of coffee each. I feel morally able to do this because it is costing those who do the work not only their time and energy, but money too. Most are on retirement incomes and are struggling to afford things like the phone bills, printer ink and copying paper. These are not small burdens and amount to far more than a Euro a year – actually, some key players are putting in far more than a Euro a day of their own money. So I don't care how you do it, whether by a special EAS levy, or by tapping rich individuals for a substantial donation, but I do expect the Aero Clubs to make the real effort needed to give us this essential financial support. Without it, we are likely to fail.

People

I can see now who is doing the work. Not counting the Unions, my roll of honour of those within the traditional EAS structure who are constantly in the front line, reading and understanding all the papers, going to endless meetings, drafting complex responses to regulatory proposals, lobbying and influencing, has just seven names on it. Again, it cannot be right, nor is it fully effective, if 90% of the burden of representing those 700,000 aviators is being borne by 7 individuals.

I asked some of them for an estimate of their workload. Looking at the various ways they chose to calculate their effort, I think they all under-estimated, but the lowest figure equated to 65 full days per year, most were around 100 days and the highest submitted was 125 hours. The person who has arguably been most pressed of late didn't provide a figure – he was probably too busy!

Those are unreasonable burdens and far more than should be asked of volunteers.

I do not count myself among those seven, but I will say from experience of the last six months that the effort I am making is damaging my marriage, my wallet and my logbook. The load needs to be shared more equitably across the organisation.

This problem exists partly because we are not properly organised to exploit the capabilities of our members, not all of whom have been given the opportunity to do more. I acknowledge that a lot of individuals are doing valuable background work, for example within their brief as TOs or WPCs. But

they are working within a comfortable and now outmoded formal structure that allows us to bumble along at a sedate pace and that is simply not geared to the volume of challenge we are facing every day from the Brussels institutions. We need to realign the organisation to what is actually happening.

I fear that the shortage of volunteers to do things, although in part because people have not been asked, may also be because people are unwilling to give more. I speak from several years of experience of the cosy slot of National Delegate, responsible for nothing, actually, and contributing very little in my case, I am ashamed to confess.

So my challenge to all national delegates, TOs and WPCs, is to ask you to consider what more you could give. If you are not currently involved in front line work, but are willing to be, please send Harry your CV and state the area where you would like to be more directly involved.

Underpinning Structure

Our roots are in the NACs. I feel that the NACs are very remote from us. One of the first things that I did on becoming President was to write to the Chairman of every NAC to establish contact. Not one replied. Yet the DG of Eurocontrol noticed my appointment and wrote a very warm letter. Also, the leadership of the EGU and the EHPU, to whom I had not written, immediately invited me to their respective AGMs. I would like the NACs to take a more active interest in what we are doing on behalf of their members and ask national delegates to take that message home.

Another factor is that the NACs vary from rich and powerful clubs such as the DAeC to organisations that are, frankly, inactive. The consequence is that influence is patchy and, where there is a vacuum, other, more dynamic, groups have formed to fill it. I will give an example from my own country, because I can do so without offending anyone. The Royal Aero Club is not inactive by any means, but it has not for many years paid much attention to regulatory and political developments and as been slow off the mark in some areas. Consequently, when the issue of charging for airspace emerged, a group of UK aviators formed a very effective lobby group called the GA Alliance and they are the ones who have the ear of UK Ministers – and, actually, the European Commission, too, because they beat us to the punch in Europe as well.

Actually, I am not too worried about that, so long as they are doing good work and coordinate with us, which they are doing now that we are in touch.

Another constraint on the clubs is that, by their very nature, they cover all activities and often lack specialist knowledge of specific sports or flying disciplines. This, and the rise of challenges at the European level, helps to account for the emergence of the pan-European sporting unions as strong advocates for their individual activities. I think that this is a very significant

development and I am particularly pleased that the EGU, the EHPU and the EMF have chosen to be full members of Europe Air Sports.

There is so much work to do that we need to coordinate and collaborate with all organisations with allied interests. I want EAS to be a big tent in which all friends and allies are welcome as integrated participants, while recognising that the federation must be sufficiently flexible to allow for the fact that organisations like the Unions are also independent entities that have their own voice. The challenge is in the effective sharing and coordination of information and effort, which is why the Programme Manager's role is so pivotal to our future.

Cooperation with Allies

I have partly covered this already. But there are issues that I have not yet mentioned. The main one is that our relationship with IAOPA has been difficult for some years, mainly as a result of differing perceptions as to what is each organisation's legitimate mandate and membership constituency. I have no wish to dissipate energy on such disputes and believe that we have reached a new understanding where we have no interest in corporate and business aviation, they do not claim to represent the air sports and we do not argue about the part in the middle, mainly private powered flying, where we both have a legitimate claim. We will see how this goes, but they are certainly cooperating wholeheartedly on issues that matter to us such as membership of the ICB and involvement in SESAME.

I have also received an approach from the PPL/IR Group Europe, who wish to join us. They are on the edge of "our" area, but are a well-organised group with common concerns and much to offer us. We shall vote on this later and, bearing in mind my "big tent" concept, I very much hope that you will vote to admit them.

The Board

In that happy time when I was a lowly delegate, the proceedings of the Board were invisible to me. In an effort to correct that, and create more involvement for the organisation as a whole, we have proposed, that there should be two observer members – one for the Unions and one for the NACs. It is an option for you. You do not have to take it up, but it is there if you want it.

I will add that the term "observer" is a misnomer. It just means they cannot vote. But we hardly ever vote anyway. I would expect them to play a full part in the debate, bring fresh expertise to the table and to play an active role as a 2 way conduit of information between the members and the Board. It is a tough job.

Talking of tough jobs, I got some feedback that people were reluctant to volunteer for the Board because I expect them to work. Yes, I do. Previously,

Board members had no defined portfolios of responsibility. That had to change, in line with normal business practice. Later in the meeting we shall be considering how best to fill several vacancies on the Board and I would like to offer you a couple of thoughts. The first is that we are looking for relevant skill sets. And the second is that we shall still have the presence and active contribution of Rudi Schuegraf and of Pierre Portman, so there is no immediate crisis to fill all the formal Board places. It could be better to wait for the right candidate than to fill a seat just to make up the numbers.

Finally, on the make up of the Board, I ask you to note that I reserve the right to co-opt anyone to assist the Board, if the Board judges that necessary.

Communications and Web Site

I put this item in the list simply to acknowledge a major shortcoming. We did not achieve the anticipated benefit with the appointment of the Programme Manager. It was a major failure, which will I believe be corrected with the appointment of Rudi Schuegraf.

Exactly the same point applies to the web site, albeit that was compounded by specific technical issues. The Board has taken action to recover the situation swiftly, and Harry Schoevers has worked very hard to get the embryo of the new site up and running.

Lobbying Skills

We have people who have some capability and we have the help and advice of the German Sports Office. But it is not enough. Lobbying is a serious full time professional activity. It is one of the ways in which I would spend money if we had money. Indeed, in the wake of my address to the GA Day at Eurocontrol, we received an approach from a specialist company offering just such a service. Meanwhile, I do not have any real answers, except to ask if you know of anyone among us who has these skills and would be willing to take an active role, if only to coordinate and advise.

Legal Knowledge

We have hitherto lacked in-house expertise on Community law. However, I note from the CV of Frank Peter Dorner, who is one of the candidates for membership of the Board that he is a qualified lawyer specialising in public law and aviation rules and is studying for his Doctorate under a professor specialising in public law and European Rights.

In conclusion:

I have gone on long enough. I hope that you are not too shocked by my message. In essence, I am saying that this is no longer a nice club that is

doing worthwhile work to a gentle timescale. We are in the trenches fighting for the availability of air sports to our children and grandchildren. The battle is happening now and our actions will determine the foreseeable future. It is a burden on our generation that we cannot ignore.

I want more of your time and ability, I want to find a way to harness that effectively and I want your home organisations to support us with enough money to do the job.