

## **BHPA PARTICIPATES IN LOBBYING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL**

You may have read in the February edition of Popular Flying (page 32) how the GA Alliance had been set up with a focus on Political Representation. Well now things are happening.

On Monday April 4th the Under Secretary of State, Ms Charlotte Atkins, met with members of the GA Alliance to discuss the problems facing General Aviation (GA) in the UK, a hot topic with the current legislation coming out of Europe. Ms Atkins is the Government Minister responsible for aviation.

Ms Atkins was flown from Battersea in an EC120 helicopter, courtesy of Jeremy James (GA Alliance member and Secretary of the Helicopter Club of Great Britain) to a private airstrip in Oxfordshire, near Didcot. Here she discussed 'farm strip flying' and witnessed a Microlight flight demonstrated by Chris Finnigan (GA Alliance member and BMAA CEO). Ms Atkins then took a short flight to Wycombe Air Park, Booker, Oxfordshire in a homebuilt Vans RV6A, built and flown by GA Alliance Facilitator and PFA EC member, Roger Hopkinson.

A presentation highlighting the messages of the GA Alliance was given by Tom Hardie (GA Alliance member and Aviation Legislation Officer for the BHPA) and was well received by the Minister. Issues raised included:

- the high cost of aviation in UK now further threatened by proposed huge rises on charges by the CAA on General Aviation as well the effect of European Airspace (Single Sky) and Safety changes (EASA)
- the unfair pressure being exerted by airlines on the CAA to make GA pay more when it is the airlines who are the major beneficiary and GA largely a loser.
- the lack of effective consultation by European organisations when it came to changes affecting GA and the need for fair GA representation at the highest level
- the lack of a UK GA policy when it comes to the operation and development of UK airfields
- the lack of support offered to GA by Government, local and regional assemblies.
- The need to ensure airspace allocation really considers the recreational and broader GA community

A tour of the facilities and businesses present on the airfield followed, with the opportunity for the Minister to discuss certain aspects informally. This included items such as the effect of EASA and CAA policies on Maintenance regimes and the efficiency on aircraft operating effectiveness, and the impact of Government and CAA policy on Aviation support businesses.

In discussion Ms Atkins was pleased to hear of scheme such as "young Eagles" which she said were important to harness and focus currently inactive and "difficult youth". She also learnt of the case for airfields contributing to the "green" countryside benefits. These benefits she said were not well appreciated.

The event concluded with members of the aviation press fielding questions to the Minister in an informal atmosphere. Ms Atkins said the visit was an invaluable experience and had "opened her eyes to the views of GA". She had gained a clearer view of the issues and was extremely pleased that a body such as the GA Alliance now existed as a focal point. The creation of this organisation, she felt, would make liaising with the GA community much easier from now on and invited input into the White Papers on Transport policy.

Members of G A Alliance involved in this event were: -

Martin Robinson	Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
Hugh Woodsend	British Gliding Association
Tom Hardie	British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association

Chris Finnigan	British Microlight Aircraft Association
Roger Dunn	General Aviation Safety Council
Jeremy James	Helicopter Club of Great Britain
Roger Hopkinson**	Popular Flying Association
Paul Draper	European Association of Private Instrument Rated Pilots

\*\* G A Alliance Focus point and Facilitator

The GA Alliance consists of representatives from the following organisations:

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) [www.aopa.co.uk](http://www.aopa.co.uk)  
British Gliding Association (BGA) [www.gliding.co.uk](http://www.gliding.co.uk)  
British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) [www.bhpa.co.uk](http://www.bhpa.co.uk)  
British Microlight Aircraft Association (BMAA) [www.bmaa.org](http://www.bmaa.org)  
General Aviation Safety Council (GASCo) [www.gasco.org.uk](http://www.gasco.org.uk)  
Helicopter Club of Great Britain (HCGB) [www.hcgb.co.uk](http://www.hcgb.co.uk)  
Popular Flying Association (PFA) [www.pfa.org.uk](http://www.pfa.org.uk)  
Private Pilots Instrument Rated of Europe (PPL/IR) [www.pplir.org](http://www.pplir.org)

Whilst the General Election was announced the day following this event it was, never the less, a marker in establishing practical experiential and lobbying contact at Ministerial level together with developing key contacts with the senior Civil Servants concerned in DfT. It thus sets a stage, whatever the election outcome, for GA Alliance in effective involvement and representation in the political scene. All in all a positive day for GA. We hope so.

[GA Presentation to Under Secretary of State Ms Charlotte Atkins](#)