



Community in Spotlight

British Microlight Aircraft Association

June 2022

General Aviation is a diverse and varied sector made up of multiple different communities. The successes and challenges for one community - such as the sailplane community - may be vastly different from others such as those operating powered aircraft training organisations.

The new Community in Spotlight initiative is led by the CAA GA & RPAS Unit to provide an opportunity for General Aviation Partnership (GAP) members to talk about their community and membership organisation. This work forms part of the regular GAP meetings and is used to highlight particular communities to share and highlight what is happening in their community. Each area is unique so the GAP and CAA are keen to hear about demographics, how the community might be changing, where they see themselves in 5 years' time and recent successes and challenges.

These community presentations are combined with an on-site visit by the General Aviation (GA) team to get to know members of the community and membership organisation and to talk about any current successes and challenges.

The **British Microlight Aircraft Association** (BMAA) is a members organisation that exists to promote microlight flying in the UK. Over the years the BMAA has influenced legislation that governs microlight flying in the UK, always looking to guide its development to be the most beneficial for its 4,000 members. The organisation also provides an information source for microlight pilots and organises or supports flying events to encourage skills development and a social side to the sport.

Our meeting on Tuesday 28 June 2022 is the third in our Community in Spotlight series. Here Rob Hughes, CEO met with us at their headquarters at Deddington just outside Banbury. On arrival, we were given a tour of their premises, meeting key technical and administrative members of staff. The BMAA has its own technical and engineering department



BMAA highlights

Formed in **1979**

Headquartered at Deddington, Banbury

8 full time staff members

118 inspectors

4,000 members

1,700 permit aircraft

£0.8m turn over

scene. The BMAA is now working with many manufacturers seeking a permit to manufacture microlights for the UK market. The changes made are making microlights increasingly more accessible.

The BMAA is clear in its ambition to ensure that more and more people, young and old, are able to engage with flying.

Rob Hughes, CEO, BMAA said,

“Our ambition is to get more people flying. Microlights represent an accessible opportunity for everyone to enjoy the freedom that aviation brings. From the work we are doing, bringing more microlight types to the UK to provide greater options,

to supporting the 400 or so microlight instructors. We recognise this is one of our core objectives. Most of our members are in their 40’s when time and money allow them to either engage with a new hobby or go back to a previous passion from their adolescence.”

There are several initiatives being run by the BMAA and akin to other conversations we have had with stakeholders, inspiring the next generation is critical. The BMAA runs the Young Person’s Flying Bursary where around 20 candidates between the ages of 15 and 20 are awarded funding. They must show some history of an interest in microlighting and be able to share what they hope to achieve in aviation should the funding be granted.

There are also initiatives with school and college groups to build aircraft and learn about aircraft design.

Different skills and training are needed depending upon the type of microlight you choose to fly. The sub 70kg class is strictly not a microlight and requires no licence or formal training, whereas anything heavier than this would require a pilot licence. The microlight therefore offers a great starting point for anyone wanting to start flying. One area of concern was the missing piece of the jigsaw; the current licence structure does not support the ambitions of some to use their microlight training to count towards a PPL for example.

and licensing department, where it has the delegated authority to administrate and print microlight licences directly to the pilots without the need for an application to the CAA.

Rob Mott, Chief Inspector & Design Approval Engineer is responsible for the 118 inspectors that work on behalf of the BMAA together with the 1,700 aircraft with a permit. Following the 2021 revision of the UK microlight aeroplane definition that incorporated the new 600kg microlight classification into law the increased weight thresholds have enabled new UK microlight manufacturers to come onto the





This is an area we hope to be improved and made more workable as part of the Licencing and Training Simplification project we are currently running as part of the GA Programme work. The first engagement phase on our proposals will be in the form of a consultation which we look to publish very soon. We hope this project will change a number of these anomalies that we currently have in the current licence structure.

We also discussed concerns over the risk of regulatory creep which the GA unit is mindful of and appreciates is not the ambition. There is a clear aim to ensure we are collaborative and

communicative in all areas of possible change to ensure that all our stakeholders, including the BMAA are considered and engaged.

Like other stakeholder organisations we have spoken with there were shared areas of concern. One significant one relating to the number of airfields being sold off for redevelopment and the difficulty some are experiencing in setting up new GA airfields. This is something we are familiar with and an area the Airfield Advisory Team have provided assistance with in recent campaigns.

Mike MacDonald, Co-Head of General Aviation & RPAS Unit said;

“We had a fantastic visit to the BMAA and it was great to hear from Rob directly and understand some of his objectives and ambitions for the future but also understand where we as the regulator can better shape the work we do to help achieve the same goal.”

The work the BMAA is doing following the 2021 revision shows that microlighting has a great future in the UK and is a one of many fantastic examples of an accessible route into aviation.”

Thank you to the BMAA for taking part in our Communities in Spotlight initiative.

