UK PILOTS REMINDED OF CHANGES TO NATIONAL LICENCES

On 24th September the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) reminded holders of ‘national’ pilot licences of the need to convert to a European equivalent by 8th April 2014 to maintain their current flying privileges.

This deadline affects all commercial and private pilots holding a valid non-JAR licence (sometimes also referred to as a CAA licence), which would have been issued before January 2000.

With only six months to go to arrange the switch over, the CAA said it was concerned some pilots would be left with invalid licences if they failed to meet the deadline. Flight instructors, in particular, could be caught out and face disruption to their training schedules.

Aeroplane or helicopter pilots holding a national PPL, CPL or ATPL are encouraged to visit the CAA website at: www.caa.co.uk for more information on arranging to convert their licence to one issued by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

It is understood that pilots flying microlights, gliders, gyroplanes or hot air balloons are not affected by the 2014 deadline.

To ease the conversion process, UK national licence holders who do miss the deadline will be allowed to use the privileges of the new Light Aircraft Pilot Licence (LAPL), for one year only. This will restrict the licence holder to non commercial operations as pilot in command in the appropriate aircraft category, and does not include any instrument flying or instructor privileges. This will happen automatically, and pilots do not need to contact the CAA to arrange to receive these privileges, it is reported.

By April 2015, however, all national licences across Europe must be converted to an EASA equivalent for the holder to continue flying ‘EASA aircraft’, which include many popular recreational types such as Piper PA28s, and Cessna 172s. National licences will remain valid indefinitely for non-EASA aircraft, it is understood and a national PPL holder flying a microlight or vintage aircraft in the UK can continue doing so unchanged and need not contact the CAA.

The need to convert national licences by April 2014 is part of the standardisation of pilot licensing across Europe, a process that began in the UK in April 2012 and is due to be completed in 2017. After that date any pilot flying an EASA aircraft will need to have an EASA licence with a valid EASA medical certificate.
Further… ONLINE APPLICATIONS

From 27th September as part of a process to improve the way it handles official transactions, the CAA will accept more applications online, including secure online payments. Pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers and air traffic personnel can now apply for a replacement licence or certificate online.

The first licensing form to be available on the CAA’s website allows anyone whose licence has been lost, stolen or damaged, to complete and submit a request for a replacement online, through a simplified application process.

This new electronic services are intended to continue a range of improvements to performance and processes across the CAA. These developments will ensure applicants for licences, certificates and approvals, receive a more efficient and consistent service.

The CAA said it was committed to reducing the number of existing paper-based forms into fewer online applications, simplifying the process for licence holders. Other licensing-related forms will be moved online over the coming months.

Online forms used by maintenance organisations were introduced earlier in the year, and those for aircraft registrations are also expected soon. The CAA is working with industry groups to develop further electronic applications, ensuring that the needs of end users are included.

The CAA is the UK’s specialist aviation regulator. Its activities include:

- Making sure that the aviation industry meets the highest technical and operational safety standards;
- Preventing holidaymakers from being stranded abroad or losing money because of tour operator insolvency;
- Planning and regulating all UK airspace; and
- Regulating airports, air traffic services and airlines and providing advice on aviation policy.