

Failure to approve GPS approaches “hasn’t been our finest hour”, says CAA’s Director of Airspace Regulation

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The All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation has pressed the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to speed up the roll-out of GPS approaches at aerodromes across the UK, after the UK’s aviation regulator admitted the four-year delay in approving them “*has not been our finest hour*”.

In a meeting in Parliament with Mark Swan, the CAA’s Director of Airspace Regulation, and Jon Round, the Head of Airspace, ATM and Aerodromes, the Chair of the all-party group expressed serious concern that the UK is lagging a long way behind countries such as France, Germany and the USA, when it comes to embracing technology which could improve flight safety.

GPS approaches – also known as GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) – to smaller aerodromes will allow for greater accuracy and safety, particularly in adverse weather conditions where visibility may be poor. Two maps (below) illustrating progress made in the USA and our European Neighbours, were presented showing the UK has fallen well behind in rolling out this safety enhancing technology.

Mr Swan and Mr Round acknowledged that the CAA has been too slow in processing applications, explained that the issue had proved far more complex than first thought and admitted that GPS approaches hadn’t been their top priority. The Directors promised the 156-strong parliamentary group that they would now get a grip of the issue.

Commenting on the meeting, Chair of the all-party group Grant Shapps MP said: *“It’s four years since ministers asked the Civil Aviation Authority to expand GPS technology to enhance flight safety at smaller aerodromes. That request was made to the then-Chief Executive of the CAA and it beggars belief that so little has happened in the intervening time. Whilst I acknowledge that there are complexities in introducing approaches in otherwise non-regulated airspace, it is now apparent that the regulator simply hasn’t put the time or effort into delivering GPS approaches. As a direct consequence we now lag years behind more proactive countries on this issue.*

“If the CAA are not able to respond to the needs of General Aviation, even after asked to do so by ministers, then Parliament must investigate whether a better approval process can be implemented. There are now 156 parliamentarians who take a keen interest in what the CAA is doing and the APPG may need to undertake an Inquiry if we don’t start to see real progress, quickly.

“In many ways, the GA Unit of the CAA has led the world in recent years, but this seems to be a blind spot and it cannot be right that

numerous airfields have shelled out tens-of-thousands of pounds to try to navigate a GPS application process that the CAA now acknowledge was not fit for purpose. We absolutely accept that this is a complex area and that applicant airfields need to provide further information on the safety case, but delay does not in any way enhance flight safety either.”

Mark Swan, the CAA’s Head of Airspace Regulation, said: *“We accept that the Civil Aviation Authority has been too slow to process applications for GNSS approaches at aerodromes. This is going to speed up, and decisions will be made in the coming months one way or the other. We too want to see greater use of technology in the General Aviation sector, and we urge sponsors to provide as much information as possible in their applications, to allay legitimate safety concerns.”*

ENDS

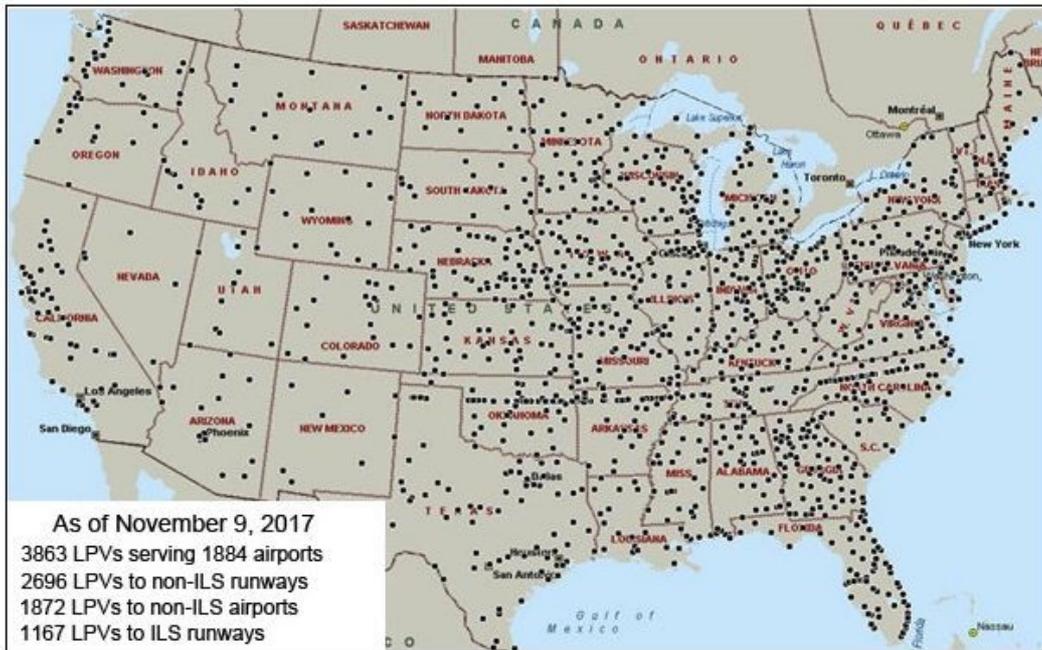
NOTES TO EDITORS

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation has 156 parliamentary members from across both Houses of Parliament, and all the major political parties. The full membership can be found at www.GeneralAviationAPPG.uk/parliamentary-members.

Applications for GPS approaches follow the CAA’s Airspace Design policy, CAP1616, which can be found here: <https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=11&mode=detail&id=8127>

The below maps show the number of GPS approaches installed in the United States of America, as well as France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Airports with WAAS LPV Instrument Approaches



Designed by and for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on General Aviation