

MODE S CONSULTATION CLOSES ON 31 MAY

A reminder that the consultation on proposals to expand the use of Mode S on aircraft operating in UK airspace closes on 31 May was issued today by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The consultation on the further expansion of Mode S was launched on 1 February. The aim of the proposals is to improve further the interoperability of aircraft with air traffic control radar and collision avoidance safety systems as levels of air traffic grow, helping to decrease collision risks and enhance air traffic control safety.

In support of the consultation, CAA staff have held a series of presentations at flying clubs to explain the proposals and answer any questions. These were attended by more than 800 people. They were held at Turweston - Northants, Lasham - Hampshire, Portmoak - Kinross-shire, Pocklington - Yorkshire, Shobdon – Herefordshire, and Husbands Bosworth - Leicestershire.

The CAA's Head of Surveillance and Spectrum Management, Andy Knill, said: "We have always maintained that we want an informed debate within the GA community so we are asking that all those who haven't responded so far should let us have their views. This will greatly assist the CAA in making its final proposals to Government".

To explain the proposals further, the CAA has produced a dedicated Mode S CDROM which has been distributed to GA associations and to individuals at the consultation presentations.

Details of the proposals and other supporting information are available from the CAA at www.caa.co.uk/modes. The website also has an interactive guide to the applicability of the proposals.

The consultation document can be seen at the link below and submissions can be made on an online consultation response form, by e mail or by post. <http://www.caa.co.uk/consultations>

The Phase Two proposals do not require that all aircraft should carry Mode S Transponders in all UK airspace but concentrate on four priority options that the CAA considers should be adopted in the UK.

They are:

1. Mandate the carriage and operation of Mode S Transponders on all aircraft operating within controlled airspace. The aim is to create an environment where the position and altitude of all aircraft within controlled airspace is 'known' to ATC and anti-collision safety systems.

2. Implement a formal process to support applications for 'Transponder Mandatory Zones' (TMZs) outside controlled airspace. The CAA already has the regulatory authority to introduce these zones but, to date, this has been used only sparingly. However, it is considered likely that more TMZs will have to be established in future to address pressing risks, such as airspace infringements.
3. Include gliders in the SSR transponder carriage regulations. Gliders are not currently technically interoperable with ATC radars or SSR based anti-collision safety systems.
4. Mandate the carriage and operation of Mode S Transponders on all powered aircraft conducting international flights. The UK would need to adopt this requirement to comply with international standards.

These four options could be implemented, individually or in combination with each other, and any final recommendation to Government will depend on information and feedback from the consultation.

The proposed implementation date for these options is 31 March 2009 but operators of aircraft with existing Mode A/C transponders will have until 31 March 2012 to have them upgraded.

For further media information contact Chris Mason on: 0207 453 6026.

Notes to Editors

The UK Government has approved the phase-out of the old Mode A/C transponder technology on aircraft operating in airspace where SSR transponders are currently mandatory and Mode S has become the required means of compliance for transponder carriage. This requirement came into effect from 31 March 2008 but operators of aircraft with existing Mode A/C installations will have until 31 March 2012 to upgrade.

A public consultation on the proposed expansion of transponder carriage and Mode S was launched in June 2006 which proposed that all aircraft should carry Mode S in all UK airspace. As a result of the feedback from that consultation, the CAA has decided that a more gradual, phased approach should be employed.

Levels of air traffic in the UK have grown significantly in the last three decades. This growth is set to continue and current long term growth forecasts for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight movements project that the number of flights per year in UK airspace could increase by between 50 and 90 per cent by 2025.