

News story: Government champion raises profile for private flying

The government has appointed Byron Davies as its first ever General Aviation Champion to help identify a network of UK aerodromes that are most important for non-scheduled flying to flourish.

Baroness Sugg made the announcement today while visiting Elstree Aerodrome to discuss the importance of private flying to the economy.

Byron Davies will lead important research and engage with fliers to identify a network of strategically important airfields to help the general aviation sector develop.

The new General Aviation Champion, who was the founding chairman of the General Aviation All Party Parliamentary Group, will deliver a report on the value of general aviation to the economy. He will also have the help of York Aviation, which has been commissioned by the government to carry out research on airfields of strategic significance.

Establishing a strategic network of aerodromes will ensure a balance between transport and housing development priorities, protecting the general aviation sector's contribution to the UK economy.

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

Smaller airfields and the pilots who use them contribute £3 billion to our economy and support more than 38,000 jobs, be that through business jet operations, flying schools or leisure flying.

We want to preserve these benefits of general aviation and ensure appropriate and proportionate protection for the significant parts of this network that underpin that contribution.

Byron brings both passion and expertise to the role and I am confident he will work closely with fliers and researchers to shape the future of the general aviation network within the UK.

Byron Davies will work with commercial, business and leisure fliers to understand how their activity contributes to the sector.

Commenting on his appointment as General Aviation Champion, Byron Davies said:

This is an exciting opportunity for general aviation and I'm delighted to have been asked to undertake this piece of work.

The sector makes a major contribution to the economy and it's only right that its voice is heard at all levels of government.

I look forward very much to engaging with the aviation community over the coming months.

The General Aviation Champion has been appointed for 12 months and will gather evidence of the sector's value to the economy and the need for a protected network of airfields.

General aviation has played an important part in the valuable aviation economic eco-system. Many of today's pilots, aircrew and engineers first came into contact and were inspired by the sector through general aviation leisure activities. At the other end of the wide general aviation spectrum the business aviation sector ensures high value individuals are able to access the destinations they need to quickly and efficiently go about their business. Business which delivers high economic value to the UK. Across the spectrum of general aviation activity research has indicated that the sector delivers in excess of £3 billion of added economic value to the UK annually, supporting in excess of 38,000 jobs.

As we seek to develop the UK's aviation sector it will be important to ensure that we balance the economic contribution of the general aviation sector with housing and commercial priorities, and that we identify exactly how this contribution is delivered, and what constitutes the critical infrastructure that is necessary to deliver them.

The General Aviation Champion will have 2 roles, one to help government develop an understanding of these issues and the other to engage with stakeholders to ensure that understanding is grounded in the knowledge and experience of the sector. The champion will steer research into the value of the sector to the economy with the aim of providing evidence to underpin the identification and protection of a strategic network of airfields critical to the long term delivery of the sector's economic benefit.