

GBR Microlight report 2012

Introduction

Microlighting remains very active in the United Kingdom. However, like last year the general economic situation has meant that new aircraft sales are very low. Microlight training generally seems to be busy with schools reporting lots of business, especially around the South East, whereas by comparison light aircraft schools seem to be really struggling.

Apart from the poor financial climate two other factors have really impacted on Microlighting during 2012 namely, the Olympics and bad weather.

The flying season started off very well with good weather early in the year but then as spring and summer arrived the weather generally was appalling, particularly at weekends when most people are available. This had a particularly bad effect on competition flying this year.

With the Olympics came lots of airspace restrictions around London and the South East. The 'Prohibited Zone' did not really effect microlighters but the 'Restricted Zone' had a big effect. The restricted zone meant you could not fly without a transponder and effectively flying in the South East was almost impossible. Many flying schools in the area were closed during the period as it was impractical to operate. These restrictions were active for a month at the height of the flying season, and as luck would have it, the weather was good then as well!

There has been a reasonable amount of new development during the year. A new P&M model, the GTR, has been approved and P&M are in the process of certifying a brand new semi enclosed composite Trike, the Pulsr. Also the Medway Clipper, a factory built fixed wing has gained approval but the UK CAA's airworthiness requirements remain a barrier to entry.

The single seat Sub-115 class continues to gain interest however sales seem to be falling.

General Statistics:

The British Microlight Aircraft Association (BMAA) has

- 3800 active members
- 2000 flying microlights in permit
- 4000 active microlight pilot licenses (approximately) and 400 new licenses in last year.

- 100,000 annual flight hours (approximately)

The Light Aircraft Association (LAA) has approximately 800 microlight members.

Accident statistics

- 65 accidents in 2012
- 5 fatalities
- 13 injuries

Competitions

BMAA held six national competitions in 2012 but only 2 of them went ahead due to the poor weather. The Competitions Committee is still actively looking at ways of making competitions more accessible and attractive to new competitors, having had some success in recent years in bringing in new people.

BMAA also ran again the 'Round Britain Rally', a distance competition run over 3 flying days with turnpoints all over the United Kingdom. Again this was plagued by bad weather so participants was down on last year but despite this the event was a success with no accidents or incidents.

The British Team competed in Spain this year and won three individual medals and overall team silver despite having a disaster in the practice week when a tornado swept through the team camp and made half its members homeless and 6 aircraft damaged.

British competitors remain concerned about dwindling numbers in the AL1 and WL1 classes. Looking through the S10 proposals there are many ways of addressing this so hopefully more participants will compete in these classes in 2013.

Rob Grimwood

UK Delegate