

# The NPPL and the LAPL

This explanation of EASA's LAPL by Nick Wilcock's is the real deal – accept no imitations

Soon after the JAR-FCL PPL was introduced to the UK in 1999, it became evident that the increased cost, complexity and medical requirements associated with the licence were causing problems. Not only had the PPL course increased in length, but with the end of the CAA Class III medical and the minimum requirement for a JAA Class 2 medical for PPL holders, some pilots could no longer continue to fly what had previously been termed 'Group A' aeroplanes. Some turned to microlights, but others found themselves grounded.

Both industry and the CAA sought a solution and in 2002 the 'National Private Pilot Licence' was introduced. The primary aim of the NPPL was, to use the CAA's own words, to provide 'an entry level licence for private pilots who wished only to fly within the UK in light aeroplanes of three specific classes by day in good weather'. Since then, it has successfully achieved this aim; regulation has been kept at a 'light touch' and costs to the individual have been

kept to a minimum. The CAA was keen to deregulate as far as possible and most of the decisions regarding NPPL policy have been made by an industry group, the NPPL Policy and Steering Committee, prior to receiving CAA approval. It has been possible to grant favourable accreditation terms for pilots seeking conversion from other licences or to receive credit for previous training and many pilots have benefitted as a result. Administration costs have been reduced by the creation of an external 'licence recommendation' company, NPLG Ltd, which checks all NPPL SSEA and SLMG applications before sending their recommendation to the CAA for licence issue. However, one of the more significant effects was that, due to less stringent medical declaration requirements, a considerable number of otherwise-grounded pilots were able to return to flying. The NPPL system has been refined over the years and now meets the requirements of a large number of private pilots who simply want to potter about the UK in reasonable weather. It is, however, a 'sub-ICAO' licence and as such is restricted to UK airspace only, unless another nation has agreed to its use under specified conditions.

## EASA

Unfortunately, along came an unwelcome elephant in the room in the form of EASA with its totally unnecessary Eurocracy. Although it would have been quite simple

for EASA to accept that EASA aircraft could be flown on existing national sub-ICAO licences if restricted to the national airspace of a member state, they decided on a different route. A 'working group', snappily entitled MDM.032, was formed with the aim of defining a 'Leisure Pilot Licence' which could be used all over

Originally it was intended that there would be an even more basic version of the LAPL, broadly similar to the French *Brevet de Base*. Although this was rejected following EASA comment response, lobbying by the French has forced the introduction of paragraph 7 into Article 4 of the Basic Regulation, which effectively



Bulldog and Piper Tri-Pacer are non-EASA aircraft



allows them to carry on issuing their Brevet de Base, restricted to French airspace only. Yes, this is the same EASA which claims that there is no provision for 'national' ratings in the Basic Regulation!

## Differences

There are a number of significant differences between the NPPL and the LAPL. The LAPL may be used at night and across all European member states; it will also be legal to fly to ICAO VFR limits rather than to the proportionally-restricted UK Air Navigation Order limits which apply to the NPPL. However, much of the accreditation for other licences or ratings applicable to the NPPL will no longer apply. For example, it is as yet unclear whether credit for an experienced microlight pilot will be granted towards a LAPL. In addition, the LAPL(A) is restricted to single engined landplanes or TMGs only, so the future of an NPPL seaplane pilot wishing to fly EASA seaplanes could be in doubt. Some of the main differences are in the table below:

	NPPL	LAPL
<b>Training</b>	22 hrs dual; 10 hrs solo incl. 4 hrs X-C.	30 hrs of which at least 15 hrs dual; 6 hrs solo incl. 3 hrs X-C.
<b>Q X-C</b>	185 km with 2 intermediate landings.	150 km with 1 intermediate landing.
<b>Tests</b>	Navigation Skill Test (prior to Q X-C), General Skill Test after completion of all other requirements	LAPL Skill Test.
<b>Privileges</b>	PIC with passengers in any aeroplane of up to 2000kg with max 4 PoB (incl. pilot), for which a Class Rating is held.	PIC without passengers until 10 hrs PIC since licence issue has been gained, then PIC with passengers on single engined landplanes or TMGs of up to 2000kg with max 4 PoB (incl. pilot).
<b>Limitations</b>	Day only, UK FIR, ANO restricted VFR limits.	Day and Night (if qualified), EU airspace, ICAO VFR limits.
<b>Validity</b>	Lifetime licence, 24 month Class Rating with fixed expiry date	Lifetime licence, rolling 24 month validity.

## Medical

Thanks to the sterling efforts of the CAA's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Sally Evans, it will be possible for a pilot to obtain a LAPL Medical Certificate from his/her GP (or rather, 'GMP' in Euro-speak). Those of you who normally rail against the CAA should note that, had it not been for Dr. Evans' hard work, it is highly likely that the medical requirements would have required a session with an AME. So for once you have a lot to thank the CAA for! Incidentally, the LAPL Medical Certificate will also be acceptable for the NPPL, but not vice versa. However, currently there is some concern about certain medical conditions which, though acceptable for the NPPL Medical Declaration, might not at present be acceptable for the LAPL Medical Certificate. The CAA is looking into this as they are firm supporters of the NPPL Medical Declaration and will do all that they can to ensure that no pilots are disadvantaged through new European regulations.

## Helicopters

Helicopterists who are unable to hold an EASA Class 2 Medical Certificate will, if able to hold a LAPL Medical Certificate, be able to fly EASA helicopters using a LAPL(H). Because a non-EASA Type



Rating cannot be included in an EASA licence, for non-EASA helicopters such as the RotorWay, the CAA intends to introduce 'NPPL(H)', regulations which will be outside the normal NPPL system. So any questions regarding the NPPL(H) should be referred directly to the CAA.

## Gliders

Those of you whose knowledge of gliding extends no further than memories of teenage Air Cadet days in itchy blue horsehair uniforms, enjoying the delights of a precious few minutes in a plywood and fabric open-cockpit Kirkbymoorside antique hauled aloft by a winch, may be surprised to learn that gliders (or 'sailplanes' in Euro-speak) are often fitted with engines these days. Things have moved on considerably in the gliding world since the early 1930s, when burly blonde youths in leather shorts were encouraged to launch each other down the Wasserkuppe in

Daglin primary gliders, of near perpendicular glide ratio, using the "Links, Recht, Links, Rechts... Achtung... Los!" elastic rope method. With one modern sailplane type having a wingspan only 10 ft less than that of a Vulcan bomber, it is often easier and safer to move such ultra high performance sailplanes to a competition site under their own steam than it is to take them to pieces and tow them there on a trailer. Equally, many of our European friends have noted that it is much more economic and *umweltfreundlich* to potter about sedately touring in an efficient motorglider than it is in a gas-guzzling spamcan. However, there are a number of different motorglider

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**Below left: helicopters can be flown without a Class 2 Medical on a LAPL(H)**

**Below: SLMGs and gliders with retractable engines are subject to 'extensions' to the LAPL (Sailplanes)**

**Below right: the question of seaplane flying on a LAPL remains unanswered**

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definitions such as Self-Launching Motor Glider, Touring Motor Glider, Powered Sailplane and Self-Sustaining Glider, depending upon whether or not the aircraft has a retractable engine and/or can take-off under its own power. Hitherto, although a Glider Pilot Licence was available, the UK didn't actually require a pilot to hold any licence to fly an unpowered glider; there were also both NPPL and JAR-FCL Class Ratings for SLMGs and TMGs respectively. Under EASA things will, as well one might have guessed, become even more complicated as there will be a LAPL (Sailplanes) as well as a Sailplane Pilot Licence (SPL), plus TMG 'extensions' as appropriate. Conversion of existing motor glider qualifications to EASA licences

is a complex subject and I wish our colleagues in the British Gliding Association the very best of luck in attempting to make sense of it all.

## NPPL to LAPL conversion

The CAA is producing a number of 'conversion reports' which will detail how existing pilot licences may be converted to EASA pilot licences. Amongst these is the NPPL to LAPL conversion report which, following circulation to specific aviation organisations for consultation comment in Dec 2011, is intended to appear in the forthcoming CAP 804, the CAA document which will supersede the excellent LASORS. The work involved in the preparation of these conversion reports is very considerable; however, the CAA is working hard to ensure as seamless a transition to EASA licensing requirements as it is able.

## "I was told by an instructor..."

There are a number of priceless gems of misinformation about the NPPL and LAPL already in circulation. One such which reached me recently was "I was told that, possibly, as of April this year, all CofA aircraft owned and operated by any UK aerodrome for training or hire will have to be EASA validated and only JAR qualified



pilots would be able to fly EASA (CofA) certified aeroplanes." Although this is, as you will be glad to note, completely and utterly incorrect, one can only but admire the sheer inventiveness of the instructor peddling such nonsense. More seriously, it is likely that a number of falsehoods and "My mate told me..." pieces of misinformation will begin to multiply across the websites in the forthcoming months. My advice to anyone being given such 'helpful' information would be to ignore it and to wait until CAP 804 is released.

## Summary

The NPPL may be used in its current form until Apr 2015. Thereafter, it may only be used for flying non-EASA aircraft. Pilots who cannot hold an EASA Class 2 Medical Certificate and who wish to fly EASA aircraft after Apr 2015 will need to have obtained a LAPL by Apr 2015.



It will not be possible to convert a NPPL to a LAPL after Apr 2015. The NPPL will continue to be available for non-EASA aircraft after Apr 2015. The process for converting a NPPL to a LAPL is currently under consultation review and the CAA intends to publish the conversion details in CAP 804. The CAA intends to be in a position to issue LAPLs to those who want them after July 2012. This includes the 'approval' of LAPL training courses. Many LAPL questions remain as yet unanswered. E.g., after Apr 2015 how will someone fly an EASA seaplane if they cannot hold an EASA Class 2 Medical? Or what credit towards a LAPL will be available to a NPPL (Microlight) pilot?

### Instructors and Examiners

It is quite evident that, despite the 12 years of JAR-FCL and the nine years of the NPPL, many instructors and examiner still don't really understand the differing requirements of each licence. Regrettably, things will become even more complicated over the next few years during the transition process from national/JAA to EASA regulation. For basic single-engined light aeroplanes alone, there will soon be no fewer than six types of Private Pilot Licence to consider:

- The old-style 'lifetime' UK PPL which will eventually be valid for non-EASA aircraft only.
- The '5-year' JAR-FCL PPL which will become an EASA PPL at the 5 year re-issue point and will be valid for both EASA and non-EASA aircraft.
- The new-style 'lifetime' United Kingdom PPL within which holders will only be able to include certain ratings which cannot be included in an EASA PPL.
- The lifetime EASA PPL which will be valid for both EASA and non-EASA aircraft.
- The lifetime NPPL which will eventually be valid for non-EASA aircraft only.
- The 'rolling validity' EASA LAPL which will have a different structure to all other EASA licences as it won't include Class



**Above: it is not yet clear what credit the microlight pilot will be allowed towards the LAPL**

or Type Ratings, but will be valid for both EASA and non-EASA aircraft.

So, if you're an instructor and *particularly* if you're an examiner, you really will need to start looking at the books if you are to provide our members with a decent service over the next few years.

### On the bright side

One of the more widely-supported proposals of EASA's NPA 2008-17 was that, not only should PPL-holding FIs be able to receive remuneration for flight instruction, but also that the requirement for them to meet 'commercial level knowledge' requirements should be dropped. However, to achieve this would have meant EASA filing a significant difference to ICAO, which certain National Aviation Authorities would not accept, so the proposal was only partially accepted. The result of this is that a PPL/FI *may* receive remuneration in accordance with **FCL.205.A(b)(1)**, but to instruct for the PPL must *still* meet CPL level theoretical knowledge requirements. Now, originally there was also to be a 'Light Aircraft Flight Instructor' for the LAPL, but this too was subsequently rejected. Instead, in accordance with **FCL.915.FI(b)(2)(i)**, a PPL-holding FI who wishes to instruct for the LAPL only will *not* have to meet CPL

level knowledge requirements. This means that suitably experienced PPL holders will now be able to become FIs and to be paid for flight instruction far more easily than was the case under JAR-FCL, perhaps bringing stability to many Approved Training Organisations. Moreover, as the more astute will already have realised, an ATO will be able to market a 'modular' PPL course consisting of an LAPL course followed by a LAPL-to-PPL upgrade course, using remunerated PPL/FIs without CPL level knowledge for all but six hours of the overall course flight instruction time. Whereas a 'conventional' PPL course would require at least 25 hours of flight instruction to be conducted by FIs who must all have CPL level knowledge. (When I pointed this out at an EASA meeting, it was confirmed that such a modular course would indeed be legal, but some NAAs didn't much like the idea of people finding ways to circumvent the Rules. To which I countered that, in the UK, we consider it a national pastime, if not an obligation, to find pragmatic solutions to obstructive bureaucracy!)

### ORS4 No. 865

Currently the CAA has granted an exemption under ORS 4 No. 865 for pilots to use a Medical Declaration with pilot licences other than the NPPL when flying SSEA, SLMG and microlight aeroplanes. However, **this expires on 8 Apr 2012** and it is as yet uncertain whether it will be re-issued, due to the reduced discretionary powers the CAA will have under EASA regulations. So if you are currently using this exemption, or are considering doing so, you would be well advised to consider other options very carefully.

### Conclusion:

The EASA LAPL will soon be with us. Yes, perhaps it does seem to be a bit of a curate's egg on first inspection, but if ultimately it brings more people into private flying and encourages suitably experienced private pilots to become full-time or part-time LAPL flight instructors, then surely it will be no bad thing. ■

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