

CIMA annual report to the 2010 FAI General Conference



Sporting Activity and Competition Review

2010 has been a disappointing year in that there was no bids for any Paramotor Continental championships in 2010; this is the first time this has happened since FAI paramotor championships started in 1997, and particularly disappointing since participation in paramotor championships has shown strong growth until now.

Nevertheless, we had a very successful European microlight championships hosted by the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom and the British Microlight Aircraft Association at Sywell Aerodrome near Northampton. The organization was such that for the first time ever in a CIMA first category event there were no official protests.

Competitor numbers were:

Class	Pilots	Aircraft	Countries
RWL1	16	16	8
RWL2	50	25	11
RAL1	-	-	-
RAL2	34	17	8
Total	100	58	12

Despite the organizers offering a generous discount on entry fees, for a second time there was not a quorum of entries in the RAL1 class (three axis flown solo) and there is considerable on-going debate within CIMA to remedy this. One solution is to reduce the minimum number of competing nations in the class from four to three, but retain or even increase the minimum number of competitors, another solution is to simply let the class die on the basis that there are fewer and fewer people flying this type of aircraft in the general population which does not augur well for the long term prospects of the class whatever temporary remedy is applied.

On a more encouraging note, a proposal accepted by the last CIMA plenary introduces two new classes of microlight into the CIMA area of responsibility, class RGL1 (microlight autogyro flown solo) and RGL2 (microlight autogyro flown with two people). The proposed definition is basically the same as for all other microlights, notably a MAUW of 300 Kg for ones flown solo and 450 kg for ones flown with two people, and the style of competition (and records) is also identical to the standard rules in FAI section 10. The formal introduction of these is still subject to a decision by CASI at the meeting on 7th October 2010 but the organizers at Sywell offered to run an informal competition for these new classes as a test. There was considerable interest, but in the end only one competitor participated (in the RGL2 class) but considering the recent growth of numbers of these aircraft in the general population I believe the prospects are good for active participation in the future.

Future Championships

CIMA runs continental and World championships in alternate years. 2011 will be a World Championships year, and to synchronize our cycle of championships with WAG, the last CIMA plenary decided 2012 will also be a World Championships year and 2013 will be a year for continentals.

The problem lies in the extreme cost of transporting microlights around the World, typically US\$ 5000 each way by air, a bit less by sea but with huge delays. With continentals in WAG years at least pilots will not need to travel so far twice in one year but even then, CIMA strongly believes WAG should revert to the original four year cycle or it will not get the best pilots, just the ones who can afford to go.

Microlight World championships tend to be in Europe, and besides the dedicated pilots from South Africa there is not much difference between a European microlight championships and a World microlight Championships. It is cheaper to move paramotors, we now have good participation from Asian nations in World paramotor championships, and have even sanctioned World championships there, but despite encouraging sounds we have yet to have any bids for continental championships outside Europe.

The 2011 World microlight championships are scheduled for Israel. An apparently very high quality bid from Korea for the 2011 World paramotor championships was accepted by the last CIMA plenary but the organizers have recently withdrawn. This is a developing crisis but there is still hope an alternative will be found before the CIMA plenary in November.

The prospects for 2012 are better, the World Paramotor championships are scheduled for South Africa and the World Microlight championships in Slovakia or Spain.

It has been an endemic problem that CIMA has worked on a very short time schedule and it has not usually been known where championships will be more than one year ahead. In a long term effort to improve this to a more sensible three or four years some changes to the rules for bidding were made at the last CIMA plenary.

Records

Pilots continue to claim records in both microlights and paramotors, there are usually about 25 successful claims each year and it looks like 2010 will be no different. In the last year there has been particular interest in the electrically powered classes introduced by CIMA two years ago.

Safety

Since CIMA was founded there have been two fatalities in 26 FAI category one Microlight championships and one in 14 FAI category one Paramotor championships; of these fatalities, only one was actually in a competition task. In other words it is a very rare occurrence and CIMA is satisfied there is no significant on-going safety problem in the activities it promotes. It manages this by maintaining a task catalogue designed to promote certain skills which can be of great use in an emergency, and the use of aircraft which are of good general all-round use rather than super hot ships which are very good at one thing (eg soaring) but tricky in other situations (eg short takeoff or landing).

Communication

CIMA recognizes its activities have not been promoted enough in the past. The editor-centric nature of the main FAI website has resulted in it not being much use to us and it is difficult to see how this will improve when it has been 'out sourced' to someone who knows nothing of what we do. As a consequence much CIMA information has been maintained on a variety of non-CIMA dedicated websites. In an effort to improve and centralize this, CIMA has set up a wiki at <http://wiki.fai.org> which is designed to allow any CIMA delegate to create and edit pages. It has a tightly controlled permissions system which allows some content to be viewed by anyone but other content only to CIMA delegates who have logged in. The cost to CIMA is negligible; 200 Euros pa.

It has been running for some months but it will take a while before CIMA delegates lose their natural shyness to use such a system, but we believe the long term prospects are good.

We have set up this wiki so other FAI commissions could use it, but it is not the place of CIMA volunteers to maintain the permissions for other commissions. This requires the introduction of a centralized 'permissions control system' maintained by FAI secretariat which is used to maintain the identity of all commission delegates and controls login access to the wiki, the main FAI website and the FAI mailing lists system. This latter I consider particularly lacking, our two mailing lists are a core part of communication between delegates yet it is an archaic system far removed from the facilities offered by the likes of Yahoo groups or Google groups which we prefer to use. Just one example of its uselessness is the absence of any method of viewing the archive which makes it very difficult for new CIMA delegates to get up to speed with the current status or for longer standing CIMA delegates to look back at correspondence if it is not available on their local system.

Media

I am convinced there is considerable potential to promote our activities in the media, particularly in paramotor competition which has been developing some very media friendly and spectacular activity, but we are completely hamstrung by the current FAI media deal which as been positively working against our interests simply because the FAI contractor rarely turns up to our championships but still retains the rights, or if they do turn up it's only for a couple of days, the people who do it have no idea what they are looking at, and they fail to capture anything very meaningful.

And it's not as if there are not some very competent people out there who are prepared to cover our championships, because there are, but they are very reluctant to do it while they are bound to give away their work to FAI's contractor for free. As a consequence no film is made, we have nothing to show anyone how interesting our activities can be, we do not pass go.

I presented a paper on behalf of CIMA to the mid-year ASC President's meeting proposing an alternative solution which could help to get things going but I am disappointed neither FAI secretariat or the Executive board have seen fit to respond in any detail, merely saying nothing can be done until the current arrangements expire in a few years time. I fear by then it could be too late and an independent series of paramotor competitions will have been established in which CIMA will have no part to play.

Equipment at WAG Turin

At the mid-year ASC President's meeting we were informed that the Aero-Club of Italy (AeCI) were unable to pay the entire WAG Turin sanction fee, but a deal had been struck involving some money and the balance in a transfer of equipment they had acquired to run it. I asked whether this included equipment used in the Microlight and Paramotor competitions, notably the giant inflatable pylons and some timing equipment, both of which would be very valuable in future CIMA competitions. The answer was not known, but I was later informed that the deal didn't include this equipment but we could buy it if we wished.

This is a very unfortunate loss, and seems to have come about simply because nobody in FAI secretariat thought to ask CIMA if there was anything it was interested in having included in the deal.

The proposed tax on ASCs

The new FAI Secretary General outlined a new Secretariat management plan at the mid-year ASC President's meeting. It was stated that staffing levels needed to be increased by one, and this could only be paid for by imposing a tax on the Air Sport Commissions. This was not mentioned in the agenda and no definite plan was put forward as to how it would be implemented. When they were eventually published, the minutes of the meeting stated that:

ASC bureaux should be provided with clear information (for their Delegates) on :

- The reasons why a part of Competition Revenues should be used to fund FAI Staff;*
- The additional benefits, services and support the Commissions would receive;*
- the basis on which ASC contributions would be calculated.*

So far, only a second document distributed with the same minutes entitled *FAI Headquarter Projects Budget Impact* has been provided, and this only gives a vague outline as to what value this new staff position might add to the services FAI Secretariat provides us, but does state the proposed tax on ASC's will be 20% of all their income. This would seem to be an issue which will be put to a vote at the 2010 General Conference, which will be before CIMA has had any opportunity to discuss it in a Plenary. This issue of having to discuss it in a Plenary was raised by most ASC presidents at the mid-year meeting but it seems there will nevertheless be an attempt to impose this on Commissions without their being able to discuss it first.

In the meantime, the CIMA Bureau is unanimously against this tax.

- NAC's receive votes in a General Conference proportional to the income FAI derives from them. As there seems to have been no consideration within this proposal of a similar proportionality being extended to ASC's then ASC's will be in a similar unhappy position to those who revolted under the banner of "no taxation without representation".
- CIMA receives its income from only one source: 10% of entry fees to FAI sanctioned Championships. Outgoings are limited to the purchase of FAI medals, the President's expenses to go to conferences and some other very small items. CIMA's account balance is more or less constant at about 35,000 CHF, this year it will reduce due to there being no Continental Paramotor Championships. With this tax, CIMA would have to increase sanction fees by 25% to retain its original net income. Championship organizers already struggle to make ends meet, in fact it is so expensive it is increasingly difficult to find them at all, and

only masochists do it a second time. To save costs at Sywell the scoring team slept on the scoring room floor, which was the corner of a hangar. Those who do this massive work will have no choice but to increase entry fees by 20%, so it is actually a tax on competitors who are already hard pressed to get to championships at all. The net result will be a reduction of competitors, and we are then into a downwards spiral where eventually CIMA will have no funds, competitors will have to buy their medals and the CIMA president will have to personally fund travel expenses to conferences.

- ASC's are the engine room of FAI. Without them, FAI would be a useless organization. In our case a lot of volunteers do a lot of work for CIMA for no financial gain and without them CIMA would be more-or-less useless. This tax will be seen by most of them as simply a way to employ people in palaces and reduce their desire to volunteer for anything. Again, this sets us into a downwards spiral where eventually CIMA will become useless.
- CIMA has plans to improve the ways championships are managed, particularly paramotor championships. First, we need some hardware, notably an improved scoring system and inflatable pylons and a timing system, (sadly, an opportunity was lost to acquire these latter two at from the WAG Turin deal). Second, we need a more automated scoring system. To fund these, the plan is to develop a series of category two competitions similar to the CIVL model, the reward being a World ranking. Excess income could also be used to help fund travel and accommodation expenses for experienced Jury and stewards at championships which is the single biggest expense for a championship organizer and their biggest problem. It seems unlikely any of this will happen if the volunteers who will be setting it up and running it see that 20% of the income will disappearing into a black hole at Secretariat.
- According to the information I have received: *The job description of the ASC Manager includes 5 areas of work.*
 - *Liaise with ASC Bureaux to assist in delivering their duties and to ensure best practices across ASCs*
It seems difficult to imagine how a single person could explain all commissions how to do their work. That person could probably never understand all the intricacies of just our work in CIMA.
 - *Organise ASC Plenary meetings*
Do we need a full time expensive person to write a few mails and make some hotel and room reservations?
 - *Maintain ASC documents*
We have always done this ourselves, we have never had any complaints, and can do it easier with new technologies. In fact the wording in our Section 10 and annexes is so carefully composed it is rather a frightening prospect that someone from Secretariat might start fiddling with it.
 - *Follow up and assist ASC projects (IT, FCE Hosting bids)*
In this case we could hire his time when we need it. Probably never.
 - *Ensure follow up of Competition OAs, especially rights protection program.*
This job is not to support the ASC, this is a job to support the Secretariat itself!

We do see a compromise. Rob Hughes departed FAI staff in June 2009, Thierry departed FAI in May 2010, it is understood neither post has been filled. FAI must therefore have funds approximating 18 months of unpaid salary, so there would apparently be no overall loss in employing someone in this

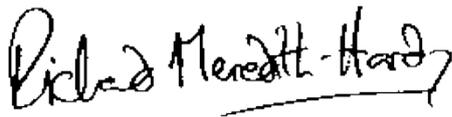
new post for a similar period. In this time secretariat has an opportunity to demonstrate it is providing a valuable new service ASCs could not do without, and therefore CIMA will become happy to pay for it in the longer term.

Because we are not at all happy about it at the moment. It is unjust, it is being presented in a shamefully undemocratic way, and is an attack on the very heart of what makes FAI actually work.

Summary

Microlight and paramotor competition is facing some difficult times but is nevertheless in a reasonably healthy condition, attendance at Microlight Championships is more-or-less constant and is still increasing at Paramotor Championships (if people are willing to organize them).

The new management style at Secretariat unfortunately seems to be putting itself into direct conflict with the people who it is actually there for, we can only hope this will change. In the meantime I wish to acknowledge the individual hard working staff members of the Secretariat who have looked after us for many years and thank them for their continuing assistance to CIMA.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Meredith-Hardy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Richard Meredith-Hardy
CIMA President