

Minutes of the November 19, 2015 Meet, SIG Aviation Meteorology



Attendees of the SIG meet: Top photo (from left to right): Katie Brown, Ric Robins, Ed Pooley, Michael de Villiers, James Morrison. Bottom photo (from left to right) Michael de Villiers, James Morrison, Robert Ashwell, Bob Lunnon. Attendees not shown in photos: Anthony Bowles, Simon Proud, Jacob Kollegger

Venue: Hon. Company of Air Pilots, 9 Warwick Court, Gray's Inn, London. Many thanks for courteous hospitality.

Apologies: Anna Mary Townsend, Matthias Steiner, George Isaac, David John Gibbs, George Anderson, Jonathan Wilkinson, Brian Hopkins, Colin Apps, Rebekah Sherwin, Claire Bartholomew

At 0945, Jake welcomed everyone, recapped the 2014 meet, details found in the Minutes report of October 29, 2014, available on the SIG page of the Society Website.

Anthony described the current, and in the near future, old, Met Office aviation page: needs of the pilot, Europe and/or UK discussion on METAR/TAF availability, distance most general aviation (GA) pilots, what pilots need, general aviation needs versus airline needs.

The site is secure.metoffice.gov.uk This service was planned to discontinue at the end of December 2015.

Everything in that web page, concurred by all, is mainly a click away, but you must register, and some services require payment.

The Met Office has created a new platform to replace the old (<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/aviation/ga>), however, getting to the material in general is many more clicks away than for the previous page, some charts are PDF downloadable, others aren't. METAR/TAF is present for only a select number of aerodromes on mainland Europe. Anthony indirectly represented PPL/IR at the meet, an organisation which has concerns over the new page. Several emails have passed between him and the Met Office's Strategic Head of Applied Science, Helen Wells, herself a SIG member.

Ric, who came to the meet to get feedback from us regarding this new page, gave an update:

2 key drivers for change

1. The system that creates web page is old, and needed to be changed tech-wise.
2. Recognition to make it usable on phones and tablets, mobile web page. user needs were captured in a series of meetings with groups such as GASCo, however, we have now become aware of a wider group of GA users who's requirements were not captured. transferring what was on old to the new. playing

catch-up to move some of the data from the old site to the new one, such as the high level SIGWX and upper level winds and temperature.

The CAA, which endorsed the page change and is the authority in this respect, is involved for ongoing development with this App. The deadline to switch off the old site of December 31 is not “set in stone”. Linda Jennings is a point of contact for any issues, not just on a SIG level but from the public at large. Ed stated that presentation is key, and presentation on new page is “horrific”. The CAA as met authority is involved; the web page is still so dysfunctional literally a month before the planned changeover from old page to new page is. CAA met officials number 4 at most. Andy wells is head, is a SIG member, his input and feedback here would be invaluable

Jake asked about audience, considering the competition: pilots don't necessarily log in to get weather, handling agents do. ippc.no is a very popular go-to site, for example, by pilots needing a quick refresh of METAR/TAF data from literally anywhere they need to go. No data was available for answering the question of audience numbers, or even how many hits compared to in-depth visits.

Continuing the discussion: En route weather is issue for many GA pilots, especially considering a history of accidents involving unprepared en route weather planning. Ric showed the weather loop layers, available from the homepage. Depending on internet speed, the loop download for the day takes anytime from about 1 to 5 minutes in the extreme. The info is detailed and shows en route weather at least graphically and visually.

Ed talked about pilots as to how flexible access must be, with ease to get the weather, considering special work, away from their usual work. Jake asked why does one need to login for the weather product? may deter pilots from entering, considering as well trying to find or remember the password. Interestingly, Anthony, when initially showing us this site, had to search for his password, which took a few minutes. When using a home computer, saved passwords makes everything easy, but if in a “C” office somewhere, getting that password may take more time than just getting the info somewhere else.

Ric summarized what has the Met Office learned from this and other feedback: Met Office awareness of the wider variety of users under the GA umbrella has increased and contact with users as to feedback has improved. As mentioned before, the deadline is not “set in stone” and most likely will be delayed.”

James described GASCo and the UK FSC – the latter due to Bob's absence from the Meet at that time. GASCo concerns itself mainly with GA, meets 3 times a year. Interesting point is a seminar for 2016, James and Bob will host it at Imperial college on April 19. The Contact at the Met Office is Darren Hardy.

Main concept is interactivity. It is structured to look at incidents of private pilots, e.g. loss of control and Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT), visibility (ground and in-flight), how to predict and interpret charts, winds and turbulence. The day is split into morning and afternoon meets on the aforementioned topics. Interactive exercise. James and Bob will ask for tutors preferably with a mixed background of meteorology and aviation. Questions still being asked as how to advertise, request for tutors from the SIG.

Ric asked about interpretation of weather: that a forecast was not bad in itself, but interpretation was incorrect. A video on how a TAF is made was talked about, and Ric mentioned that it will be included in an interactive version of the GetMet information leaflet, available soon. What are the issues and implications behind information gathering and distributing.

Robert asked about weather rules at Ryanair. James answered that the rules are set by the governing authorities and that all airlines must adhere to them. Examples included Tempo and Prob30/40, interpretation. competition, feasibility.

Jake talked about NetJets issues, since NetJets is a mix between GA and airline ops. The competition do not have to adhere to the same rules as in the airline industry, since many aircraft are privately registered or operate under GA rules. GA rules may be more relaxed than airline rules, particularly with regards to weather, and therefore some GA operators can interpret “bad” weather using a less stringent criteria than, say, NetJets or an airline. This in turn may hamper the feasibility of using NetJets, but with safety comes a price, and this juggling of feasibility to safety is an endless issue.

Bob arrived at midday. He mentioned fellow SIG member Rebekah Sherwin expressed interest in being present at the Imperial College meet.

Bob expanded on UK FSC issues. One interesting one, which got an amused reception, was a concern by some operators about radiosonde balloons launches, and near misses. Ed asked the obvious question “why is it a problem now”, since the number of balloon launches is less than it ever was before before.

Bob mentioned about the crosswind limits issue at Manchester, whether trend should be put in ATIS, or that pilots are informed about trend by tower. There was an incident of an airline diverting to Doncaster only to divert from there back to Manchester due to winds. Ed and Jake, with James in support, added that tower can give “instant wind” which then the pilot can use to interpret what the actual state of the wind is, and not the 5- or 10-minute average that is prevalent in ATIS, tower wind reports, and METAR/TAF.

Ric mentioned the process about how a trend is made: "We currently produce TREND to be added to METAR for the following airports: Heathrow, Manchester, Norwich, Scatsta, Aberdeen, Sumburgh. These are at the specific request of the CAA. They are created by the meteorologists who produce the TAF for those airports either from on site, at Aberdeen or Exeter." (quoted statements sent by Ric to Jake on 20/11/15).

Military airports do TRENDS as routine at the request of MOD, provided a weather observer is stationed there. At time of these Minutes release the previous statement has not been confirmed. Rob talked about his observational work at Marham.

AMDAR acars link (aircraft now casting) data usage, Rob and Katie gave inputs. Mainly Easyjet do it from Luton, but it is a cost issue as well, Met Office has to pay.

Ed talked about SKYbrary. The initial issue nearly 10 years ago was critical mass, now the priority is content quality, continued relevance and coverage. The millions of users extend worldwide but are numerically dominated by those in Europe and North America.

It runs on a Wiki platform, but SKYbrary has a platform based on professional concurrence, the material is supposed to be accurate, not exactly like Wiki.

SKYbrary is about Operational Safety in Aviation with it's main focus on commercial air transport, but it also, as far as resources permit, seeks to cover general aviation/aerial work too.

EUROCONTROL, a Member State organization, is currently the sponsor and the Memorandum of Understanding by which the Society became a SKYbrary Partner was therefore signed by Director General of EUROCONTROL. Working partnerships with independent professional organizations such as the Society are in place and being continually sought. SKYbrary is overseen by a Supervisory Board of senior industry people from Airbus, Boeing, Flight Safety Foundation etc.

IT support is from a Dutch contractor, and the editorial and content management function is provided by a team based in three European countries and in the US. A key thing to bear in mind is that initial access to SKYbrary content is overwhelmingly by google (or other) search. Internal links then facilitate further access. SKYbrary content invariably features on the first page of search results for most aviation safety subjects.

Weather-related content currently appears primarily in three 'Categories' - Weather', 'Glossary' and 'Accidents and Incidents' All of the first and some of the second have content which needs 'validating' (if necessary after improvement) and then 'watching over to be sure they remain up to date, but but gaps can also be filled with new articles. All articles should wherever possible be

supported by documents placed on the SKYbrary 'bookshelf'. Items placed - and articles written by or validated by RMetS are all much more likely to be 'discovered' on SKYbrary than almost anywhere else due to the expertise of the SKYbrary IT contractor. The Accident & Incident Category has over 800 articles summarising Official Investigation Reports (mainly but not entirely civil air transport) of which over 70 have 'WX' in the title and are tagged with the relevant weather issue (searchable category as is everything there from the Homepage (skybrary.aero). New accident and incident articles are published quarterly, but the response to 'high profile' events is usually almost immediate.

In addition to these is the 'Airport Directory' where entries currently have a very brief 'climate categorisation' which is arguably of little practical use and could usefully be preceded by mention of local weather 'issues' of the type that would be covered in the Cat B & Cat C airport briefs which professional pilots working for an AOC holder will have in their Operations Manuals. The opportunity to improve safety by adding more 'local weather knowledge' to these entries exists.

Why RMetS? Expert group on weather, helps SKYbrary to provide proper service, and gives RMetS far more exposure than through its own website and provides networking opportunities.

Copyright issues with regards to diagrams and photos are always an issue for SKYbrary, but can be resolved particularly with regards to RMetS. George Anderson in a previous meet said that photo copyright is in the photographer's hands, and that permission, especially to an open-source objective, is mainly granted.

Bob Lunnon, commenting on the history of the discussion of SKYbrary. (see SIG meet minutes of 2014 and 2013, but also a SKYbrary meet in 2014 Bob attended on behalf of the SIG, the focus has shifted from certain areas.

Applied meteo, need to develop collaboration between RmetS and the Air Pilots, recognition of contribution between two parties. There is a need to prioritize issues, editing, new articles, etc. Bob volunteered for turbulence review; Jake and James expressed interest in starting to look into various airports' meteorological sections for review and update. The goal for the SIG's SKYbrary team is to continuously update and edit articles, with a focus on areas of expertise. Jake commented that the absence of one member, even if Point of Contact, should not suspend SIG operations in SKYbrary project.

Due to another meet to be held at the Air Pilots meet room, Jake hastily closed the meet at 13:30 and thanked everyone present for attending.