

# SAN NEWS

*Together We Can Fly*

**June 2024  
Issue 1**

The Strategic Aerodrome Network (SAN) survey was launched by the UK VFR Flight Guide and the Airfield Operators Group (AOG) to protect airfields in January 2024

Lord Byron Davies recommended the instigation of a Network in his 2018 report that accompanied a Green Paper, Aviation 2050: The Future of UK Aviation.

The purpose of the Network is to:

- Draw more attention to the range of General Aviation Airfields across the UK
- Highlight their economic, transport, connectivity, recreational, training, community, environmental and emergency service value
- Promote their importance now and for the future
- Help protect and ensure they are able adapt and meet future aviation needs
- Promote the sector to public bodies

The survey is gathering not just aeronautical details but also details of the activities going on, the community linkages, history and thoughts on the future.

The information will be invaluable in helping to safeguard our General Aviation infrastructure, ensure the network is viable, remains available for current users and for transport, recreation, connectivity, training, environmental value, emergency services and as green spaces able to accommodate future innovation.

The UK VFR Flight Guide has been helping to protect Airfields since it was first published and will continue to do so at no cost to the airfield.

The AOG represents General Aviation airfields across the UK to promote their importance and to share information on all airfield operational issues and challenges

We wish to thank the 110 airfields that have so far completed the Strategic Aerodrome Network Questionnaire! Your answers and comments are already providing information and ideas and we now plan to start sharing that information and ideas across the General Aviation community.



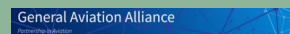
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Supported by



## Summary Results

### So Far

#### Is the Airfield?

13 Licensed  
84 Unlicensed  
0 Military

#### Traffic Type

92 VFR only  
1 IFR  
4 VFR/IFR

#### Nav Aids available on the Airfield

0 VOR/DME  
0 DME  
3 NDB  
0 ILS  
3 Lctr

#### Does the Airfield have associated airspace?

0 TMA  
0 CTR  
0 CTA  
11 ATZ  
2 MATZ

#### Does the Airfield have ATC?

36 Yes  
59 No

#### What ATC services does the airfield have?

0 APP  
0 TWR  
0 GND  
2 RAD  
0 DEL  
0 ATIS  
6 AFIS  
16 A/G  
12 Safetycom

#### Types of Rwy lighting available

0 APP  
7 Thr  
11 Rwy  
6 PAPI

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTED BY THE SAN SURVEY

The side bars in the Newsletter summarise results so far. Each Newsletter will update the statistics and provide any analysis we think worthwhile.

In this, first, Newsletter we have drawn out comments made by the 66 to date that state that their Airfield is Strategically Important, not all of the 66 airfields wish to be listed at present

**Note:** Not all questions were answered by every airfield completing the survey

### Question 40

#### Do you consider the Airfield to be strategically important to GA?

102 Airfields answered this question, 8 airfields skipped the question

66 Yes

38 No

The following are some comments submitted by the Airfields as to why they are of strategic importance

- The airfield has a long-standing history within the community and is a central hub within the Midlands for microlight pilots (*Otherton*)
- Location close a major city and travel routes for passengers and flying training facilities for both fixed wing and helicopters. Maintenance facilities for both fixed wing and rotary (*Denham*)
- It services the horse racing industry in the area of North Yorkshire whilst also providing a valuable service to the local Harrogate, York, Northallerton, Thirsk business community to travel UK wide (particularly East West) and Europe (particularly southern Ireland. (*Bagby*)
- There are too few airfields nationally. Also, in this particular area topography makes difficult the employment of an Airfield/strip. So Hanley is relatively unique! (*Hanley William*)
- Largest GA airfield in Cornwall. Agreement with 16 local primary schools for aviation and history lessons on site. Two activity scout camps held on airfield every year for devon scouts and Cornwall scouts. (*Bodmin*)
- Local pilots fly in for a chat and coffee on a regular basis. (*Aughrim*)
- It provides a 365 Day availability and does not Waterloo. Provides Landing and Parking for those visiting nearby Sulis Hospital and the City of Bath. (*White Ox Mead*)
- Sole airfield SW Scotland (*Castle Kennedy*)
- Location close to London, Extensive mix of GA activities (*Blackbushe*)
- Community Centric (*Beccles*)
- Classed as NSIP by UK DfT, located close to the coast of France, helicopter flight training and heli sales centres, fixed wing sales, construction for commercial operations for aircraft up to code F a/c opening 2027 / 28. (*Manston*)
- There are very few skydiving clubs in the UK and it is almost impossible to establish a new one (*Tilstock*)

- Very close to Manchester city centre and host to the training of a large portion of PPL students in the Northwest. Services to both UK and foreign military and SAR. Base to two air ambulances and one police helicopter. Regularly used as a fuel and overnight stop for utility helicopters. (*Manchester Barton*)
- Major part of the transport infrastructure for the Silverstone race circuit. Also home of the LAA. Located in the middle of the country. Offers pilot training, aircraft maintenance and resprays, hangarage and parking. (*Turweston*)
- Nearest to Cardiff City, Newport City & Chepstow Races (*Newport City*)
- First in the UK with electric charging and home to an electric aircraft project. Charger was no. 4 in the world exclusively solar powered. Only licensed GA aerodrome in Norfolk. Forms the centre of an electric charging network and with planning permission for 6 large solar chargers, up from current one. Top 20 inland Airshow. Manager of airfield is Chair of BADA, CAST GA Group and Deputy Chair of AOG. On Working Group of Airfield section of APPG for Aviation. Host of other reasons (*Old Buckenham*)
- Yes for gliding. Excellent gliding site for conditions that the Welsh mountains give. It's a Mecca for UK glider pilots (*Lleweni Parc*)
- Chirk hosts Dragon Rapides, early flexwing, historical glider, Tiger Moth and many Gypsy and other engines on display (*Chirk*)
- Geographically the airfield sits class G airspace in central southern England. Adjacent to motorways and railway stations visitors can access the site easily. Our Border Force agreement means we can clear customs and dispatch aircraft to Continental Europe and receive incoming flights. Our location is the ideal refuelling point before cross channel flights. We have 550+members in the flying club and 150 + based aircraft. We host annually the largest Microlight trade fair in the UK and the LAA rally. (*Popham*)
- Very few airfields on the Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire border (*Berrow*)
- Far South-West of England - great location for x-country and uncongested airspace. Very scenic - St Ives, Sennen beach, St. Michaels Mount, etc. All the facilities including hard runways, RNP Approaches, HI AGL lighting, lovely terminal building and cafe. ATC, RFFS and Avgas & Jet A1. Room to expand, Permitted Development Rights, interest from drone operators to Isles of Scilly. (*Lands End*)
- Only airfield on the Isle of Sheppey (*Eastchurch*)
- one of the last remaining WW1 all grass airfields (*Bicester*)
- Aircraft engineering. Location. Complete range of aviation activity (*Derby*)
- shrinkage of GA airfields. beautiful location (inbound tourism). major infrastructure investment pending for fuel / runway improvements / increased hangarage / maintenance and/or heritage operation / GA-focused events (*Kittyhawk*)

## Summary Results So Far

### What are the Airfield operating Hrs?

2 H24

29 SR-SS

57 PPR only

8 Out of Hrs cover

### Is the Airfield Border Force designated?

53 Yes

45 No

### Fuel availability

5 Electric

0 Hydrogen

22 AVGAS 100LL

13 JET A1

4 Mogas

10 UL91/94

### Aircraft parking on Airfield

78 Grass

18 Hard

### Does the Airfield provide maintenance facilities?

5 Part ML

3 Part CAO

2 BCAR

4 Part 145

2 Part 21

3 CAMO

0 Part 147

### Does the Airfield have compulsory handling?

0 Yes

33 No

63 N/A

### Airframe de-icing availability

7 Yes

95 No

## Summary Results So Far

### Meteorological services available on the Airfield?

3 METAR

3 TAF

5 ATIS Tel

2 ATIS Radio

17 Webcam

### Does the Airfield have noise abatement procedures in place?

43 Yes

53 No

### Is there fire cover on the Airfield?

18 Yes

75 No

### What type of ground support is available?

2 GPU

10 Electric charge

6 Handling

7 RR refuelling

### Does the Airfield have heritage links?

30 Yes

59 No

### Is your Airfield at risk?

8 Short term

23 Medium Term

23 Long term

### Does the Airfield provide services for?

8 SAR

14 HEMS

12 Police

19 Military

13 Utility companies

### Would you be interest- ed in the new Drone infrastructure?

38 Yes

55 No

## AIRFIELD FOCUS—BODMIN

BY JAY GATES



There has been a lot of talk recently about the proposed, now shelved, suggestion that airfields should be classified as greenfield sites, and not brownfield sites. This is, of course, a method of protection from developers, and some airfield owners who are not fussed about aviation to the extent that they will protect their land from the enquiries of developers.

Of course, the greenfield and brownfield argument is broader than that, as all grass airfields surely cannot be anything other than greenfield sites, as they lack any form of real prior

development, other than a hangar or two, and a periodic grass mowing. Those airfields, especially the ex RAF and USAAF sites, which were heavily developed are a different kettle of fish. However, can an airfield be both greenfield, with potentially brownfield aspects at the same time? There is one airfield that may fit that bill. That airfield is Bodmin Airfield in Cornwall.

In the late 1960s, the land that is now Bodmin Airfield was part of a large sheep farm, as most farms on the edge of Bodmin Moor still are. The owner of the land was a philanthropic businessman, and the founder of the Trago Mills stores brand, which is very well known in the Southwest of England. He wanted to bring aviation to this part of the Cornwall, and in the days when simply setting up an airfield was not as onerous as it is today, he simply set aside ten of the fields on his farm, removed the hedges, undertook some minor landscaping, and created a new airfield. That would be the greenfield aspect.

For aircraft hangars, he spoke to the owners of the Newton Abbot bus company in Devon, who were redeveloping the bus depot, and purchased the old structures. A garage for a bus is pretty much the same as a hangar for an aircraft, and a bus depot can happily be used for dozens of aircraft. For the new Flying Club facility he spoke with one of the Highway Construction companies, and procured two large wooden, clapperboard, highway workers huts. Add a buried 20,000 litre fuel tank, and a large parking apron, with a single taxiway leading to the grass airfield, and that is your brownfield aspect.

Over the next 50 years, the airfield developed a flying club, and a flying school, and is now considered to be a strategic aviation asset for the nation. The APPG have been advised of this consideration. Cornwall only has one other flying school, for a county of 572,000 people (2024 data), and is surrounded by the ocean on three sides, so not much flow of students from neighbouring counties.

The only neighbour is Devon, they only have three airfields with flying schools for a population of 814,000 (2024 data). That is not a lot of choice for a population of around 1.4 million people.

Despite that, Bodmin Airfield, and Cornwall Flying Club, have produced some of the finest commercial pilots that currently grace the UK skies, with two former students going on to earn a 'Red' call sign as Pilots with the great RAF 'Red Arrows' display team. In the civil world, many former students who gained their PPL at Bodmin Airfield now fly as Captains and First Officers on Boeing 737s, Airbus A320s and ATR-72 airliners with British Airlines such as TUI, Jet2, and Eastern Airways.

Bodmin Airfield is almost unique, in that it is the flying club owns the airfield, it is not leased from a landowner. That helps with developing the airfield as the club wishes to, and managing the 60 acre site in a way that has, inadvertently, resulted in the airfield receiving national ecological status. By not spreading any form of chemicals, herbicides, pesticides, or fertilisers, on any part of the airfield over the last 50 years. This has resulted in the natural development of a traditional wildflower hay meadow.

The last airfield survey by Botanists recorded no less than over 180 species of wild flower and wild grass, including three species of Orchid, which themselves numbered in excess of 3,000 plants.

Aviators tend to not know, or even forget, that since the end of WW II, traditional hay meadows have reduced by 97% due to modern agricultural methods, and land development. The result is that Bodmin Airfield, in terms of acreage, is now thought to be the single largest site of a traditional hay meadow in the southwest of England.

The outcome of this is that the Wildlife Trust, and Natural England, with support from Cornwall County Council, have conferred 'County Wildlife Site' status on the airfield. It is not a level of statutory protection, but will be a brave developer who tries to entertain thoughts of developing the airfield site. Such development plans are also not likely to ever get the support of any local politician. We may be the only airfield in the United Kingdom to have had this important status conferred on them. So, Bodmin Airfield can rightly be said to be a dual greenfield and brownfield site.

Today, Bodmin has a cross runway structure with runways 13/31 (610m long), and runways 03/21 (480m long). A full Air/Ground radio service is provided, every day of the year, except Christmas Day. The clubhouse now has a first class diner serving hot meals, hot and cold drinks, with free Wi-Fi provided for all visiting pilots. If you are driving in, car parking is free.

The flying school provides flight training, via a purpose built flight training suite of offices and briefing rooms, and offers both PPL and LAPL training on three different types of aircraft. In 2024, a new Magni Gyroplane was added to the fleet, with two PPL(G) licensed instructors available for those wishing to learn to fly something a little out of the ordinary.

Lastly, aviation is not just about the here and the now, it is about tomorrow, and those who are coming after we have gone. Bodmin Airfield is considered to be a local community asset, and the members regularly host primary school classes, Beaver Colonies, Wolf Cub Packs, and two annual Aviation Scout Camps to instill a passion for aviation into the next generation. The airfield also offers work experience to local secondary school pupils, this year alone have offered placements to 12 students from schools all over Cornwall and Devon.

In such a dangerous modern world, full of despots and populist crackpots, Bodmin Airfield is truly a good example of what a GA airfield should be, and what a GA airfield should offer to its local community. It is why the Government should be doing more to preserve GA airfields, and why they should view the development of GA as a national strategic asset.

## Summary Results So Far

### Activities on Airfield

33 Flight training  
58 Recreational flying  
9 AOC  
8 Flying displays  
14 Aviation related commercial activities  
6 Airshows

### Does the Airfield have flight training available?

23 PPL  
21 NPPL  
2 MEP  
5 IR  
6 CPL  
23 Ground school  
7 Aerobatics

### Does the Airfield have environmental measures in place?

19 Habitat conservation  
13 Biodiversity  
14 Animal grazing  
21 Land cultivation

### Does the Airfield have non-aviation activities?

57 Yes  
38 No

### Does the Airfield engage with community groups?

28 School visits  
26 Cadets/scouts  
15 Aviation history clubs  
9 Social learning groups  
14 Voluntary groups  
29 Open days  
10 Flying displays  
8 Apprenticeships

## Airfields Stating Strategically Important

Aughrim  
Bagby  
Balado  
Beccles  
Bicester  
Blackbushe  
Bodmin  
Bognor  
Castle Kennedy  
Chirk  
Cumbernauld  
Denham  
Derby  
Eaglescott  
Eastchurch  
Eggesford  
Elstree  
Enstone  
Eshott  
Fairoaks  
Farway Common  
Fenland  
Glenswinton  
Great Massingham  
Insch  
Kirkbride  
Kittyhawk  
Lands End  
Ledbury  
Little Gransden  
Manchester Barton  
Main Hall Farm  
Manston  
Membury  
Newport City  
Old Buckenham  
Pent Farm  
Perth  
Pocklington  
Popham  
Ripple  
Rochester  
St Michaels  
Skegness  
Shobdon  
Stoke Golding  
Strathaven  
Tibenham  
Tiffenden  
Tilstock  
Turweston

## STRATEGIC AERODROME NETWORK (SAN)

We plan to issue this Newsletter 4 times a year.

Each Newsletter will highlight a common challenge faced by Airfields and alongside will identify potential solutions to managing those challenges. We can draw on the excellent information provided in the Survey. Please highlight any issues you would like to raise.

Each Newsletter will have a short description of the activities and issues at one Airfield – if you would like to follow Bodmin and be showcased please let us know!

We know how isolated Airfields can sometimes feel, but many challenges, innovations and experiences are faced by many and highlighting these will help to protect and sustain our Network of General Aviation Airfields.

*'If there is an issue you would like us to address - VAT, Business Rates, Planning applications, the price of mowers, drainage, .... we can use this forum to do so!*

We are working together on this – we welcome your ideas, advice, feedback and issues you are facing or solutions you have found to problems you have encountered.

***Together we can help protect GA Airfields!  
Together We Can Fly!***

If you have not received a survey link by email, please email [louisesouthern@btinternet.com](mailto:louisesouthern@btinternet.com) for a survey link

The survey takes 10 mins to complete

Thank you for helping to protect the UK airfields for the future generations

*Thank you for taking the time to read the SAN Newsletter  
Ann & Louise*