

Wimborne MAC Participates in CAA Airspace Modernisation Trial

The Wimborne Model Aero Club were invited to participating in a CAA Airspace Modernisation trial at their Cashmoor site in Dorset. This is one of four model aircraft sites in the UK participating, which includes Buckminster, LMA NW site and Phoenix Model Club. Additionally, four full size glider sites and four hang/paragliding sites, one of which is a Dorset Hang/Para gliding club that operates from various sites around Dorset.

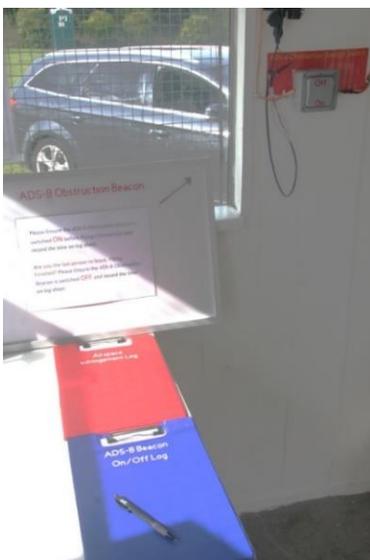
The trial involves an ADS-B beacon which transmits on 978 Mhz and is coded with the Cashmoor site details i.e. position and NOTAMed area of operation (up to 1500' agl /1850' amsl and out to 0.5 nm from the strip) being placed on the roof of the club hut and being activated whenever model flying is taking place.



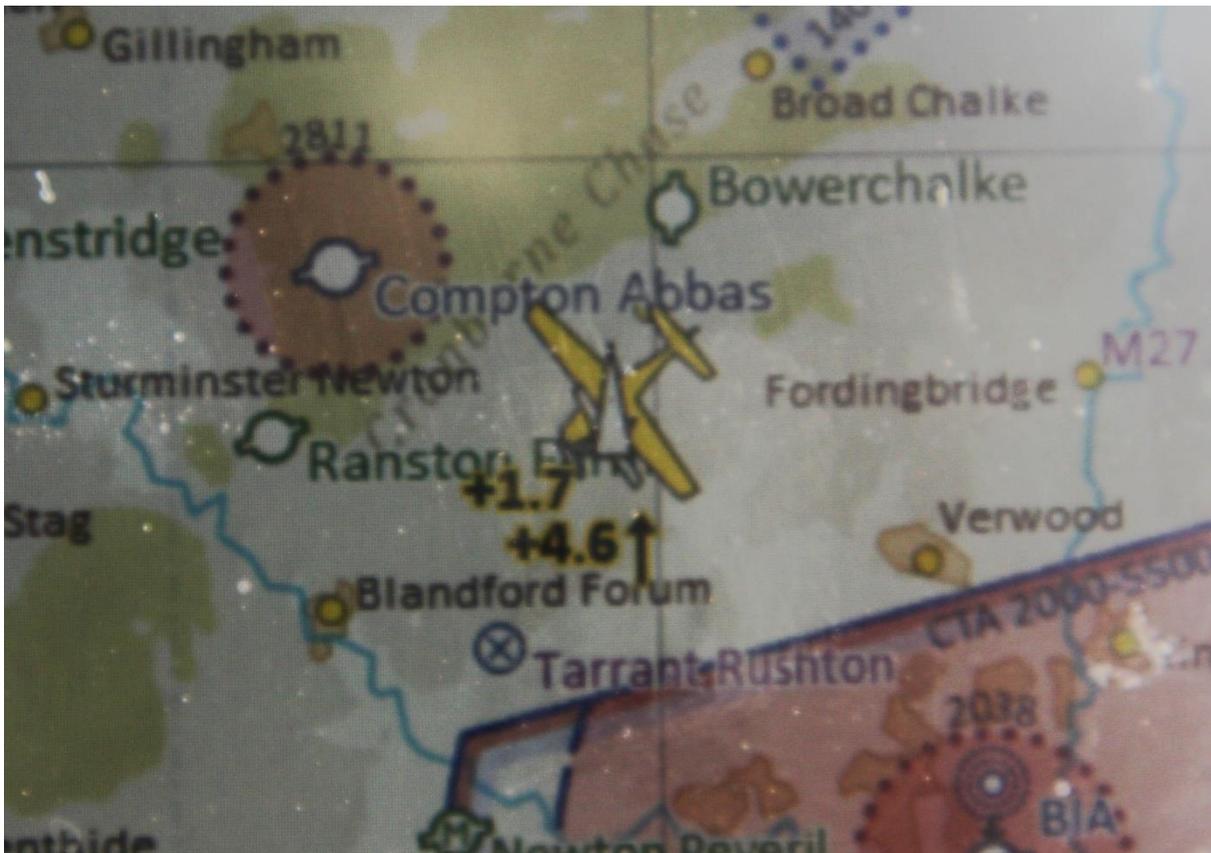
This trial went live on Saturday 10th September 2022. The basic principle of the trial is to warn pilots of suitably equipped aircraft of the operation and the extent of model flying taking place, to allow them to better avoid the NOTAMed airspace. Not all aircraft are equipped with suitable equipment despite a big drive by the CAA to encourage this with heavily subsidised equipment available for light aircraft. However, this is a sub set of the trial to

establish the extent to which such equipped aircraft exist within the area.

The trial was originally intended to last until the end of October but a delayed start (due equipment being held up in Customs) may mean extending the trial until the end of November. Unlike some of the other sites, which have to deploy the equipment manually and ensure portable batteries are suitably charged etc the Wimborne Club have tried to make the operation of the equipment as easy as possible using their own solar powered bank of 12 volt batteries hard wired to the beacon via a switch. So all that is required by members is to ensure the beacon is switched on before flying commences and the time logged in a folder provided and likewise the beacon is switched off at the end of flying and the time logged in the folder provided. The logged times are important to correlate with pilot reports of receiving the beacon, which is another part of the wider trial.



Additionally, any infringement of the WMAC NOTAMed airspace will be logged during the period of the trial to aid with the trial report that Peter Willis (WMAC BMFA Rep.) will have to produce at the end. Ironically just a few minutes after the beacon went live on Saturday 10th September Piper Cub with a glider in tow. passed along the alignment of the Cashmoor runway from West to the East at about 1300-1400ft so clearly the pilot did not have the requisite equipment in his aircraft, or for that matter had read the standing NOTAM!! This makes the point that although the beacon is operating it does not in any way diminish the club member's responsibility to maintain a good lookout and take whatever action is necessary to avoid full size aircraft.



This is the display a pilot would see in his Electronic Flight Bag software (this is using a uAvionix SkyEcho 2 feeding into SkyDemon software on a laptop PC) the white obelisk is the obstruction and the +1.7 is the altitude (above mean sea level) of the obstruction (model flying) relative to the aircraft altitude and the +4.7 with the up arrow indicates the height the full size pilot should climb to mainly because the EFB software was set (by default) to achieve a vertical clearance of 3000ft from any obstruction.

When asked if WMAC would participate in this trial it was seen as an opportunity to understand and possibly influence what is likely to come the way of the sport at some time in the future. There are already various issues identified for the wider model flying club community about the logistics of such a requirement but if this solution removes the requirement for individual model aircraft to be fitted with conspicuity equipment, as is now becoming a requirement in the USA, then it is worth pursuing this lesser option from a cost and complication point of view.