

EDITORIAL

Pulling the plug on R&D

Rising electricity prices are, of course, in the headlines today for consumers in the West, and particularly the UK. But what if your electricity bill increase was not just for lighting and heating your home, but for powering wind tunnels that use 15gigawatts per year to push vast volumes of air at high speeds around large tubes? That is the situation facing the UK's Aircraft Research Association (ARA) in Bedford which is set to see its energy bill jump from around £6,000 a year to over £1m per annum thanks to new billing rules which are based on peak usage, not overall consumption (see Transmission, p 12). For a small aerospace facility that uses short bursts of very high power for its wind tunnels, these new rules disproportionately affect its operating costs, pricing structure and future investment.

Some might argue that, like homeowners, the ARA will just have to suck up the pain and pass these costs on to its customers. However, this ignores ARA's unique place in the UK's and wider global aerospace ecosystem, as a vital R&D facility for aerodynamic testing. Otherwise, the risk is that crucial aerodynamic R&D work moves overseas to competitors and in time, the UK could lose another of its aeronautical 'crown jewels' that helps maintain its global aerospace position.

New Deputy Editor

Readers will hopefully join me in giving a very warm welcome to our new Deputy Editor, Stephen Bridgewater. His 20-year career in aviation journalism spans AOPA, Hon Company of Air Pilots, *Aircraft Cabin Management*, *Pilot*, *Aeroplane*, *Jets* and other titles.



Tim Robinson FRAeS, Editor-in-Chief
tim.robinson@aerosociety.com @RAeSTimR

Correspondence on all aerospace matters is welcome at: publications@aerosociety.com

Editor-in-Chief

Tim Robinson FRAeS
+44 (0)20 7670 4353
tim.robinson@aerosociety.com

Deputy Editor

Stephen Bridgewater
+44 (0)20 7670 4351
stephen.bridgewater@aerosociety.com

Production Manager

Wayne J Davis FRAeS
+44 (0)20 7670 4354
wayne.davis@aerosociety.com

Publications Executive

Chris Male FRAeS
+44 (0)20 7670 4352
chris.male@aerosociety.com

Production Executive

Annabel Hallam
+44 (0)20 7670 4361
annabel.hallam@aerosociety.com

Book Review Editors

Tony Pllmer and Katrina Sudell
bookreviews@aerosociety.com

Editorial Office

Royal Aeronautical Society
No.4 Hamilton Place
London W1J 7BQ, UK
+44 (0)20 7670 4300
publications@aerosociety.com
www.aerosociety.com

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Chief Executive

David Edwards FRAeS

Advertising

+44 (0)20 7670 4346
partners@aerosociety.com

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Wayne J Davis
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aerosubs@aerosociety.com

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