UK Civil Aviation Authority

Cost sharing flights: guidance and information

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Introduction

1. The information contained within this Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) is intended to provide information and guidance for pilots and passengers wishing to undertake a cost sharing flight. Amendments to the cost sharing regulations come into force on 1st October 2025. This updated information is issued to clarify those changes.

Background

2. Cost sharing flights are flights shared by private individuals[1]. The 'cost-shared' part is the costs of the specific flight which can be shared only between the pilot and others onboard the aircraft. These costs are the 'direct costs' which are the costs directly incurred in relation to a specific flight (e.g. fuel, airfield charges, rental fee for an aircraft).

3. There can be no element of profit for the pilot as these flights are not commercial, and if profit is suspected then the flight might be operating outside of the regulations and therefore be illegal. The contribution towards the direct costs of the flight by the pilot must not be less than the total direct cost divided equally by the number of people on board.

4. A flight for the transport of passengers, for which remuneration (payment) or other valuable consideration has been made, is defined as a Commercial Air Transport (CAT) flight. Under the UK Air Navigation Order 2016 (the Order), similar circumstances exist where the flight would be defined as a Public Transport (PT) flight.

5. If a flight is CAT or PT, the operator must have an Air Operator's Certificate (AOC); the pilot must hold at least a Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL); and the aircraft must be certificated and maintained in accordance with the appropriate airworthiness requirements.

6. The cost sharing rules are a derogation to the Assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 965/2012 (hereafter referred to as the Air Operations regulation), and an exception to the UK Air Navigation Order 2016 (hereafter referred to as the Order).

7. The derogation at Article 6.4(a) of the Air Operations regulation allows flights involving UK registered Part-21 aircraft that would otherwise be considered CAT to be flown in accordance with the operating rules for non-commercial flights (such as cost sharing flights) subject to specific conditions. Article 13 of the Order also allows cost-sharing for what would otherwise be a PT flight and aligns those aircraft which are not subject to the Air Operations regulation to that derogation.

[1] The term 'private individual' in the context of cost-sharing flights, refers to pilots, who may also be the operator, and who must be acting as a private individual, i.e. not an organisation or company etc.

8. The safety and conduct of any flight including cost-sharing flights is the responsibility of the Pilot in Command of the aircraft. The pilot must conduct the flight in accordance with the regulations for non-commercial flights with light aircraft by private pilots.

Scope

9. The cost-sharing arrangements apply to other-than complex motor-powered Part 21 aircraft and non-Part 21 non-complex motor-powered aircraft registered in the UK.

10. For other aircraft types such as Sailplanes (Including Powered Sailplanes) and Balloons, reference should be made to Article 3(2)(a) of the respective UK Sailplane/Balloon Regulations for cost-shared operations in these aircraft types.

Guidance

11. No more than six persons (including the pilot) are permitted on a cost sharing flight.

12. Passengers should be made aware that the pilot may amend or cancel the flight for any reason, including at short notice and is under no obligation to complete it.

13. The pilot is under no obligation to undertake the flight or to take any passengers or luggage if they do not wish to do so. The pilot can refuse to board a passenger for any reason and does not need to provide any justification.

14. It is the pilot's responsibility to ensure the flight is insured for cost sharing flights with passengers although passengers are responsible for checking that any personal life, accident and/or health insurance they have is valid for non-commercial flights.

15. To carry passengers, a pilot must have completed, in the relevant class or type rating, three take-offs, approaches and landings in the preceding 90 days. If carrying passengers at night, one of those take-offs and landings must also have been at night (not required for holders of an Instrument Rating).

16. If a cost sharing flight originates or is registered in a country other than the UK and travels to the UK, the strictest set of requirements of the two countries will apply.

Passenger Declaration Form

17. A Passenger Declaration Form must be kept for each passenger undertaking a cost sharing flight in which they must confirm that they understand the flight is not being operated as a commercial air transport or public transport flight. This form must be completed prior to flight, retained by the pilot/operator for 6 months from the date of the flight and is to be produced when requested by an Authorised Person[2].

[2] 'Authorised Person' means (a) any constable or (b) any person authorised by the CAA (whether by name or by class or description) either generally or in relation to a particular case or class of cases

18. The Passenger Declaration Form can be a paper or electronic record, provided it contains the minimum information prescribed by the CAA. An example Passenger Declaration Form can be found on the CAA website.

19. A Passenger Declaration Form must be completed by the Pilot in Command of the flight and as a minimum contain the following information:

    i. Date of Flight
    ii. Aircraft Type and Registration
    iii. Departure and Arrival information
    iv. Passenger information on the differences and associated risks between Commercial Air Transport (CAT) and flights under the cost sharing regulations
    v. Passenger Name(s), contact details and passenger signature or other means of indicating acceptance of cost sharing flight

20. A Passenger Declaration Form is not required to be completed and retained for passengers who hold or have held a pilot's licence provided the Pilot in Command has been satisfied of the evidence of such a licence.

21. A new Passenger Declaration Form does not need to be made for passengers on repeat flights who have flown with the same pilot on a cost sharing flight within the last 6 calendar months, provided that the original record is retained, updated to include the repeat flight details and retained for a further 6 months from the date of any repeat flight.

Declaration and consent:

22. Passengers who are required to sign the declaration and consent form and who are under the age of 18, or who otherwise cannot legally or physically do so, should have the risks accepted on their behalf by an individual who has legal authority to make decisions for that person or by an individual to whom such authority has been delegated during the relevant period.

Advertising

23. Cost sharing flights are private flights and therefore may be conducted by a pilot holding a private (non-commercial) licence. As these flights are shared by private individuals, they should not be advertised as an offering of a flight to any destination and time at the determination of a passenger.

24. The advertising of cost sharing flights is permitted under the cost sharing rules subject to certain conditions. The advertisement or promotion must be placed by the pilot intending to operate the flight and must include:

(i) the start and end locations of the flight;

(ii) the date when the pilot is available to conduct the flight;

(iii) a statement that the flight is a private arrangement and not conducted at a level of safety in accordance with CAT or PT standards;

(iii) the licence type held by the pilot;

(iv) the class of medical certificate or medical declaration, held by the pilot

(v) the total number of hours flown by the pilot; and

(vi) the total number of hours flown by the pilot in the advertised aircraft type in the three months prior to the advertisement being placed.

25. The promotion of cost sharing flights can include the use of online 'flight sharing' platforms. Where cost shared flights are arranged through online platforms the CAA recommends the use of only websites that have signed up to the UK Charter. Platforms that have signed up to this Charter support the provision of appropriate information to both pilots and passengers and help to ensure that cost-sharing flights are conducted safely and within the scope of the regulation.

Direct costs

26. The 'cost-shared' element is in reference to the costs of the specific flight which can be shared only between the pilot and others onboard the aircraft. These costs are the 'direct costs' which are those directly incurred in relation to a specific flight which include only:

- ✓ Fuel
- ✓ Oil
- ✓ Airfield charges
- ✓ Aircraft rental fees at current market rate

27. The pilot must pay a contribution to these direct costs. The contribution towards the direct costs of the flight by the pilot must not be less than the total direct cost divided equally by the number of people on board. Pilots may however choose to pay more than the proportional costs.

28. There can be no element of profit for the pilot as these flights are not commercial, and if profit is suspected then the flight might be operating outside of the regulations and therefore be illegal[3].

29. 'Annual costs' are not a direct cost and therefore cannot be included in the costs shared between pilots and passengers for a flight. 'Annual costs' are the cost of keeping, maintaining, insuring and operating the aircraft over a period of one calendar year. These costs are required to be paid by the pilot/operator of the aircraft with no contribution from passengers.

[3] If you believe a cost sharing flight is being operated outside of the regulations, please make an online report to the CAA via our website at Report a potential breach of aviation law | UK Civil Aviation Authority

Joint owners:

30. In the case of a jointly owned aircraft, the CAA considers the hourly rate, normally payable by a joint owner for use of their aircraft, to be a 'direct cost'. It should be no more than the average market rental price.

Explanation of terms

31. ‘Part 21 aircraft’ are regulated in accordance with Assimilated Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (known as the ‘UK Basic Regulation’) and the implementing regulations made under it.

32. ‘Non-Part 21 aircraft’ are outside the scope of the UK Basic Regulation. Non-Part 21 aircraft are covered by the UK Air Navigation Order (ANO) 2016.

33. A ‘complex motor-powered aircraft’ means:

i) An aeroplane:

- With a maximum certificated take-off mass exceeding 5,700 kg; or
- Certificated for a maximum passenger seating configuration of more than 19; or
- Certificated for operation with a minimum crew of at least two pilots; or
- Equipped with (a) a turbojet engine(s) or more than one turboprop engine; or

ii) A helicopter certificated:

- For a maximum take-off mass exceeding 3,175 kg; or
- For a maximum passenger seating configuration of more than 9; or
- For operation with a minimum crew of at least two pilots; or

iii) A tilt rotor aircraft.

34. A ‘non-complex motor-powered aircraft’ or ‘other-than complex motor-powered aircraft’ should be construed accordingly.

35. For other aircraft types such as Sailplanes (Including Powered Sailplanes) and Balloons, reference should be made to Article 3(2)(a) of the respective UK Sailplane/Balloon Regulations for cost-shared operations in these aircraft types.

36. ‘Direct cost’ means the costs only directly incurred for a flight and include only:

(a) fuel; (b) oil; (c) airfield charges; and (d) aircraft rental fees at current market rate.

37. ‘Market rate’ means the average rental price of the same type of aircraft in the same geographic area on the particular date of the flight.

38. ‘Annual cost’ means the cost of keeping, maintaining and operating the aircraft over a period of one calendar year.

39. ‘Commercial operation’ means any operation of an aircraft, in return for remuneration or other valuable consideration, which is available for the public or, when not made available to the public, which is performed under a contract between an operator and a customer, where the latter has no control over the operator.

40. ‘Valuable consideration’ means any right, interest, profit or benefit, forbearance, detriment, loss or responsibility accruing, given, suffered or undertaken under an agreement, which is of more than a nominal nature.