

CAA conservatism means that cockpit customising in the UK is a far more drawn-out process

'The difference between our two environments,' says Gary Savage of British Bell agent Alan Mann Helicopters, 'is that the FAA is far more tolerant than the CAA - or the JAA come to that. In the States, assuming you have the right approvals, you can design and build almost any new system to customer requirements, with the expectation of getting it approved. It will cost and will not happen overnight, but it'll happen.

'In the UK, however, unless you are merely extending the capabilities of an already approved design, you can be on a hiding to nothing. If the customer is determined to get what he wants then we are happy to go through the mill for him - but he'll have to reckon on a significant price hike and extended delivery date. You'll first need to certify the new system, and then get certified on the particular type.'

As a result of this attitude (while you understand the frustrations of companies like AMH, you don't get far arguing for a more liberal attitude with a safety organisation), the UK has not exactly been a hotbed of cockpit creativity for a long time. But, if your new helicopter is to be UK-based, you can get around the problem by having it certified elsewhere. Savage says, 'As long as it is not being used for public transport we used another registry: in our hangar now we have more US and Caribbean call-signs than Brit ones. We are flying more pilotage for owners now than regular charter.'

Given all these caveats, how would *he* deal with our mythical multi-millionaire? In simple terms, he will want a machine at his beck and call - and whatever weather.

'To make it work together I'd go for a 4-axis autopilot, integrated with a GPS-linked moving map, and a satcom phone,' says Mann Avionics' Alan Watkins. Honeywell produces the SPZ-7600 autopilot: to date it's only been fitted to the B412 as a SAR function but there's no practical reason why it shouldn't go into, say, a B430. If you enter the co-ordinates of your destination as an RNav waypoint, it'll get you within a square metre of where you want to be - so you can be sure of landing in the lower paddock without disturbing the horses in the upper one.

'If you've an appointment elsewhere you can navigate to it and get an accurate "on top" from a moving map - like the EuroNav III. Then you press a button and carry out a SAR circuit to the hover over that point. The EuroNav III is primarily aimed at police units that use it as a task-management system, but one corporate UK user uses it extensively, if not as a primary aid, to help its Sikorsky S-76 crews navigate around the country. Its mapping database can hold both digital and scanned paper charts, to cover both en route and terminal navigation requirements.'

A further EuroNav III is currently being fitted to an EC 155 by Air Hanson Engineering (now part of the Lynton Group), which is also based in Surrey. It was due to be delivered to a private customer with UK and South African business interests as *Helicopter World* went to press.

Radios take up a great deal of space on an instrument panel. New owners may want to save it with an integrated system such as the Honeywell Primus II Radio Management Unit, which is currently available on the...

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