

LICENSING & STANDARDS GUIDANCE

July 2026

Applicability: Holders of PPL, CPL, SCPL and ATPL issued under CAR 1953

PILOT LICENCES ISSUED BEFORE THE CIVIL AVIATION ACT 1990

Introduction

From time-to-time pilots holding a PPL, CPL, SCPL or ATPL issued prior to the Civil Aviation Act 1990 approach CAA wishing to exchange these licences for Part 61 lifetime licences. With the introduction of the Civil Aviation Act 2023, CAA has reviewed the position to facilitate future requests.

Position

Some pilots hold licences originally issued under the Civil Aviation Regulations 1953. In certain circumstances, those licences remain valid legal documents today because they were preserved (“saved”) by transitional provisions in both the Civil Aviation Act 1990 and the Civil Aviation Act 2023.

However, these licences cannot now be converted into lifetime licences. The mechanism that allowed a saved licence to be exchanged for a lifetime licence under Civil Aviation Rule 61.9 was removed in 2006.

If a licence had already expired before 1 September 1990, it was not preserved by the 1990 Act and has no legal effect today.

Where a licence has been preserved through both the 1990 and 2023 Acts, it retains its original expiry date. The later legislation does not convert it into a lifetime licence or extend its validity.

The CAA is currently reviewing licences that may have been converted to lifetime licences after the exchange mechanism was removed in 2006. Pilots who received these licences did so in good faith and may have relied on them for many years. The purpose of the review is to determine whether any administrative action by the CAA is required and, if so, what that action should be.

Summary

Whilst some old terminating licences may still legally exist as “saved” documents they cannot be converted into lifetime licences anymore. Meaning, that whilst it exists as a legal document, it has no practical use in operating an aircraft.

To obtain a lifetime licence today, a person must comply with the current Part 61 rules, unless there is some other specific pathway that applies to their individual situation, such as recognition of an overseas licence.