

**Airspace Strategy Board Minutes – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

<b>Attendees:</b>	
Robert Courts MP, Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Security	Richard Knight, Chief Operating Officer, Newcastle International Airport
Ian Elston, Deputy Director for Airspace, Noise & Resilience, DfT	Roger Hopkinson, Chairman: General & Business Aviation Strategic Forum
Martin Rolfe, CEO, NATS	Paul Beckford; Chair, Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise, ANEG Representative
Juliet Kennedy, Operations Director, NATS	Andrew Lambourne, Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise
Tim Johnson, Policy Director, CAA	Neil Robinson, Chair, Sustainable Aviation
Stuart Lindsay, Head of Airspace Modernisation, CAA	Seamus O'Hare, Department for Infrastructure (Northern Ireland)
Jonathan Sharratt, Principal, Policy & Oversight - Airspace Modernisation, CAA	Gary Cox, Head of Aviation, Transport Scotland
Sir Timo Anderson, Chairman, Airspace Change Organising Group	Paula Street, UK Airport Consultative Committees
Chery Monk, Head of Communications, Airspace Change Organising Group	Rupert Dent, Regulation Director, Association of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems UK (ARPAS-UK)
Commander Simon Lippitt, Head of Airspace Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Defence	Chris Gadsden, Head of Regulation, easyJet
Karen Dee, Chief Executive, Airport Operators Association	Captain Simon Scholey, Head of Flight Technical, British Airways
Andrew Sinclair, Head of Noise and Airspace Strategy, London Gatwick	Andrew Farrimond, Infrastructure and Projects Authority
Kathryn Leahy, Director of Operations, Heathrow Airport	Tim Johnson, Aviation Environment Federation
Dave Lees, CEO, Bristol Airport	

**Agenda Item 1: Introduction from Aviation Minister**

Minister Courts (MC) introduced attendees and welcomed them to the third meeting this year of the Airspace Strategy Board (ASB). He was pleased to note the normality restored to the governance of the meeting.

MC highlighted the government's development on sector recovery since the last board meeting in July.

He highlighted the government's efforts to simplify international travel measures, leaving only the red list which is to allow the Government to take precautionary measures in light of emerging variants which we have recently seen with regards to Southern Africa.

He acknowledged the recent changes to the red list and the introduction of PCR testing for international arrivals was disappointing, but it was important to have flexibility to react if there is a change when public health is at risk.

MC explained the red list will be reviewed in 3 weeks' time and Government will continue to review all international travel measures.

MC acknowledged the Government's significant progress towards reopening and stabilising international travel. He was pleased to have seen the inaugural double British Airways and Virgin Atlantic flight to US from Heathrow and thanked industry and Government for their hard work towards this.

MC Government sympathises and understands the challenges currently faced by the aviation sector and acknowledges the vital role of the aviation sector to the UK economy. He assured the board members that it was a government priority to fully restart the sector as soon as possible in a safe and sustainable manner.

MC recognised some legacy issues in the sector such as existing, air traffic routes, air traffic management systems, inefficiencies brought into account through excess fuel burn, carbon emissions and noise abatement issues are still as relevant as they have always been. MC emphasized this critical moment for building back out of pandemic to create a new modernised air traffic system, and that he is grateful for the board member's continued support and engagement.

MC gave an update on programmes progress since the last ASB in July.

MC updated on the progress since the last ASB in July, DfT has used powers in the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Act 20221 for first time, to extend NERL Licensing agreement from 10 to 15 years to assist with finance. As well as laying two Statutory Instruments in November, to set out appeal rights for airports and how turnover will be calculated in relation to penalties. These SIs will both be debated in Parliament before becoming law and will show the Act operating practically when in force.

MC spoke about two recently launched consultations by the DfT Jet Zero which was published in July. Which set out DfT's vision for the aviation sector to reach net zero by 2050. He explained that over 1,300 responses had been received and are currently being analysed to form basis of the department's Jet Zero response, which is due to be published in early 2022.

MC raised the UK recently hosting COP26 in November, with 120 world leaders and 38,000 key figures brought together to tackle the challenge of climate change. MC spoke about his highlights attending Transport Day at COP26, where the International Aviation Climate Ambition Coalition, and the sustainable aviation fuel policy toolkit were launched.

The second consultation launched was the DfT's Future of Transport Regulatory Review consultation, published in September which closed on the 22 November, which covers regulation for new aviation technology, such as Beyond Visual Line of Sight of drones, air traffic management and advanced air mobility, to help identify legislative gaps and hoped all board members were able to engage with both consultations.

MC raised the DfT is developing a Strategic Framework for the sector which is set to be published in due course and explore the key issues facing the sector.

MC noted the recent announcement that DfT and CAA convening of the Task Force on Electronic Conspicuity to work with the manufacturers, to assist with interoperability and safety for airspace users, which held its inaugural meeting on 22nd November 2021.

MC welcomed FASI airspace change sponsors continuing to make use of the £5.5m grant funding announced earlier this year and thanked the sponsors for remobilising their programmes and continuing to engage with the Department, CAA and ACOG on this. MC acknowledged the budget announced in early October 2021 and explained DfT had submitted bid for further FASI funding, however it was a challenging Spending Review and Ian Elston would provide more detail in his update.

The Minister noted that CAA continue to progress their AMS strategy with a consultation planned for early next year, thanking those attending the board who had been engaging with CAA on this, and updated that the CAA had started activity on their CAP1616 review which would also be consulted on in the new year.

MC acknowledged ACOG have been working on Iteration 2 of their Masterplan for Airspace Change, and that Sir Timo would be taking board members through this work later in the session.

The Minister welcomed NATS' upcoming Free Route Airspace deployment in Scotland and noted this was a key milestone for the programme and looked forward to Martin Rolfe of NATS providing update on this later.

## **Agenda Item 2: Joint DfT and CAA Update, Ian Elston and Tim Johnson**

### **DfT Update:**

Ian Elston (IE) provided an update on update on airspace modernisation work continuing at moment, as well as other developments in DfT policies, and finally on the issue raised by community groups from previous July ASB meeting.

IE explained that earlier this year, HMT and DfT agreed funding package for the FASI programme and this work is now underway, with all sponsors reengaged with the programme. He noted that DfT were aware beforehand that £5.5m would not get all FASI sponsors all the way through Stage 2 of the CAP1616 process, and when DfT initially requested this funding from HMT, it was just for the current and previous financial year.

IE updated the board on future funding of the programme; the Department was unsuccessful at the recent Spending Review, and therefore are now engaging with HMT on a bilateral basis similar to last year with this programme. He acknowledged there was an appreciation that when funding was agreed last year, it was hoped that aviation sector would be further in recovery at this current point in time. He clarified that there was no guarantee of further funding, but believed the department had a strong case to make to HMT on this, and the Department will continue to liaise with sponsors to understand what is required.

He reassured that Ministers are very supportive of this programme, and that DfT recognises the importance of the current funding to sponsors for them to reach the end of Stage 2 work. IE hoped to provide an update regarding the funding to the board soon.

IE provided an update on the Pilot Common Project (PCP), explaining this was EU legislation that was retained post EU-exit which the department had consulted on earlier this year. IE flagged the issue of PCP implementation dates which are no longer achievable due to the impact of COVID19, and that DfT is in the process of drafting SI to amend these dates which mainly applies to the larger airports and hope to lay early next year. The department continues to engage with industry on this.

IE reflected on the Government's recent decision regarding ICCAN, following the independent review with Ministers it was concluded that many of ICCAN's functions could be effectively performed by CAA and as a result in September ICCAN was formally wound down. IE explained that DfT are working closely with CAA to see what functions should move over to them early next year, and that DfT have been working with ICCAN staff on projects that can continue, with the CAA will give a more detailed update shortly.

IE noted that the Government is currently developing a future aviation strategy framework for next 5-10 years, and that while DfT recognises challenging time for sector, we are keen that recovery is on the way regardless of the recent setback seen with the routes to southern African due to current health impacts. He explained the new framework would look at a number of areas including recovery, regional connectivity, airspace, consumers issues, climate change, noise and the critical role of aviation on UK's

global impact, and that DfT will look take into account to the previous Aviation 2050 strategy, but also reflect on the significant developments and challenges in the sector currently.

IE addressed the proposal from community groups from last meeting; requesting to have access to funding to assist with their engagement in the CAP1616 airspace change process. He explained that the Department had considered the request and that officials are currently putting advise to Ministers for consideration, following a decision from Ministers DfT will update the board with the decision.

#### CAA Update:

Tim Johnson from the CAA (TJ CAA) provided an overall update on the AMS initiatives from the CAA paper circulated. He highlighted that there are numerous green and amber packages and he flagged that those that initiative tagged as red, such as PCP and EC, were being assessed against original timeframes, and while these are red at moment good progress has been achieved with thanks to a number of people sat on the board for their work on progressing the initiatives.

Secondly TJ CAA spoke about the CAA's AMS refresh, explaining that the current AMS has been in place for last 3 years and that a lot has moved on or changed. TJ CAA discussed that over last 6 months the team has extensively engaged with stakeholders, many of these being ASB members and their organisations who have inputted. He acknowledged that level engagement and input from stakeholders so far been fantastic and was greatly appreciated, and he welcomed the continued input from stakeholders on the upcoming consultation starting in January.

TJ CAA outlined the scope of the AMS refresh, stating that a lot of important initiatives happening on AMS already, especially on terminal airspace change, would not be changing. He explained that the integration of new users will be a big area of scope in the AMS Refresh, to enable the safe use of airspace by all users. TJ CAA highlighted the UK aviation position outside EU as another key area of the AMS refresh. He spoke about the relationship with ICAO frameworks and looking at how the UK can follow ICAO's strategy for airspace to align globally.

TJ CAA updated on the CAP1616 review, which the CAA committed to undertaking when the process was first introduced in 2018. TJ CAA said CAA are seeking preliminary views from stakeholders on how the process is currently working but not looking for formal responses at the moment, and areas identified as appropriate changes will be in the formal consultation next year.

TJ CAA set out the CAA's new noise functions following the government's decision closure of ICCAN, outlining the scope of the CAA will have new noise activities and a new sustainability panel. TJ CAA highlighted 3 areas of activity CAA will take on; Technical Advice to support government in policy making decisions, Information and Research - such as understanding how the aviation sector are performing overall on different dimensions of sustainability, and finally areas covering best practise guidance on aviation noise management.

TJ CAA explained that the new sustainability panel will provide CAA with advice on activities taken forward, and the panel will be modelled on the CAA's exiting consumer panel which has been in existence for over 8 years which proved very useful to CAA, and should be in place next Spring. CAA are recruiting a chair and other panel members.

MC asked TJ CAA to expand on the scope of the AMS refresh consultation.

TJ CAA set out that the AMS needs to be a collective integrated strategy, with focus on the safe integration of GA and new users that will be linked to existing initiatives such as EC, and noted the FASI programme is still very important and there are no proposals to change this initiative. TJ CAA explained that the AMS review has a broad scope to cover the various new airspace activities, and it's important to have a broad scope as these all need to operate under one airspace system. TJ CAA added that the CAA's engagement

over last months has looked at broader stakeholder views, and once the consultation has been concluded, CAA expect a finalised AMS in Spring/Summer next year.

MC asked TJ CAA to comment on the progress of the FASI Grant spending.

TJ CAA noted that the FASI grant funding has not been spent as much as they'd like it to be, and that CAA have been working with DfT, and sponsors to help encourage making use of funding available in this financial year. TJ CAA noted that prospects for longer term taxpayer funding seem unlikely at the moment, but there is still a need to keep momentum in programme and he is keen to see sponsors make the most use of money available for Stage 2.

MC asked TJ CAA to expand on the current initiative's ratings, and how these have changed since last ASB in July.

TJ CAA explained that despite some red ratings, progress is being made. He noted there is more momentum in initiatives, but the pandemic has created challenges in the timescales, and therefore what we see is mixture of performance status against these areas.

Rupert Dent (RD) congratulated the CAA on the work done on their AMS refresh to date. RD highlighted that there had previously been doubt about lower airspace and BVLOS being included in the refresh, but lots of work had been done around this and the outlook is now much better.

TJ CAA thanked RD for his feedback. Stuart Lindsey (SL) has been leading that piece of work and should be credited. TJ CAA added that the quality of stakeholder input had been great, and progress would not have been possible without that.

Sir Timo Anderson (TA) raised a point on FASI grant funding – this is an issue due to reporting timescales. When government confirmed the funding, airports built a spend profile based on the activity they thought they would undertake. Airports' invoicing profile can lag by anything from 1-2 months, so the picture may not be quite as behind as it seems. ACOG have agreement from the sponsors that they will have spent their money on value adding work, by the end of the financial year.

Karen Dee (KD) asked that if there is anything more that AOA can do to help HMT understand the funding challenges and to help build a stronger case for more funding, then to please let her know.

**ACTION:** MC confirmed that Ian Elston (IE) would be in touch with KD

Paul Beckford (PB) commented on the proposal for community funding support – communities feel strongly that they need financial support to be able to participate fully in ACPs, but appreciate there is a reticence for it to set a precedent. He asked whether there was anything in the Planning Act regarding nationally significant infrastructure projects that can help make funding available.

IE confirmed that DfT will set out to ministers the full range of options. IE highlighted that the airspace modernisation programme cannot be looked at in complete isolation and we must consider precedent setting in terms of other major infrastructure projects. He added that the purpose of setting up CAP1616 was to ensure that community groups can be engaged and can understand airspace changes. It is not an easy process to navigate and it needs to be accessible to all.

Tim Johnson from the AEF (TJ AEF) queried the functions CAA would be picking up from ICAAN. He asked if ICAAN had objectives in terms of transparency, accountability and building trust - would those move over to the CAA too.

TJ CAA clarified that there would not be a precise translation of ICAAN's objectives over to the CAA. CAA will instead be looking at what they can deliver.

TJ AEF responded that AEF had an understanding when ICCAN existed that some of the holding industry to account and accountability work would be an ICCAN function. He raised his concern that if these don't map across directly it may increase the case to allow for community support.

IE added that in areas where CAA cannot undertake the roles, DfT would look to see if they could be delivered by them. He confirmed discussions are being undertaken with community reps regarding what CAA's role will look like. IE welcomed community groups engaging in this and stressed that DfT and CAA would like to see community views represented.

TJ CAA explained that CAA's role in gathering information on performance and research will aid the accountability point to an extent, and that there are various views on whether there should be a more extensive regime around holding industry to account.

Andrew Lambourne (AL) raised his view that airspace change is something that can be a win-win for both communities and industry and a vital part of achieving climate change activities. He felt it is vitally important to reduce waste and ensure a modern airspace that works well. AL stated his view that the airspace change process should not be done to communities, but communities must be able to partake fully and inform the process, so they do not suffer the effects of poorly designed airspace. He added that his belief that communities must also be represented in a balanced and empowered way. He felt there had been loose talk about the use of the word sustainability earlier in this meeting, and his view is that sustainability means leaving the future generations no worse off than we are now, and continuing expansion might not be the best way to do that, which needed to take account of. AL stated he felt it was important that we do not talk about the pandemic as purely a setback, and that it has had a huge impact and may result in changes to how we travel forever. He believed that when the effects of climate change become more severe, air travel may be blamed in part. AL would like to see more of a conscious balance between benefits being achieved in this board and a better sense of what sustainability means.

MC asked TJ CAA to comment on CAP1616 refresh in the context of AL's point above.

TJ CAA – CAA are very keen to hear from stakeholders on how the CAP1616 process is perceived by them to have been functioning for the past three years. He set out that the point of the refresh is to consider the different stakeholders and to create a structured process which allows all views to be considered. TJ CAA clarified that decisions will not necessarily suit any particular party, but the engagement through the process is really important.

MC passed over to Roger Hopkinson (RH)

RH said he welcomed the CAP1616 reviewed. He highlighted the number of failed ACP applications recently attributed to poor engagement and inappropriate designs. He felt that the CAP1616 review outcome must ensure that the process is efficient and cost effective, and noted that TJ CAA did not cover that when presenting this earlier. He suggested a package of guidance materials addressing those issues would be helpful to ensure process efficiency and policy adherence.

TJ CAA responded by saying that these kinds of views are precisely what CAA are seeking in the review and welcomed RH to provide a response to the online questionnaire and consultation to this effect, and RH confirmed he would provide responses.

### **Agenda Item 3: ACOG Update, Sir Timo Anderson**

TA began by saying that it had been a busy period for ACOG since the last board meeting. TA covered three main strands of activity. Firstly, the FASI grant funding disbursement – TA is confident this is on track. Secondly, engagement – ACOG's engagement strategy is a series of concentric rings/phases, and finally, the

Masterplan, with each iteration the scope broadens and deepens, leading up to the final iteration (4) and its elements.

ACOG's website One Sky One Plan platform was launched on 29 November 2021 and the plan was published on 25 October 2021. The plan is a laypersons description of airspace modernisation and how ACOG contribute to it. The platform is a direct point of entry for anyone with an interest in Airspace Modernisation, to understand what the aims of the programme are. The platform also contains various educational resources.

On Masterplan iteration 2 engagement, TA stated that this has so far focused on the AMS stakeholder groups identified in the AMS itself. A list was provided on the slide. ACOG have a database detailing exactly who engaged and who declined.

TA set out that iteration 2 will provide 5 or 6 case studies highlighting illustrative trade-offs. These will help people understand the process and what constitutes a trade-off. It will assist them in forming questions and understanding prior to engagement.

TA clarified it will also include impact assessments of users, it will not be in granular detail, for example whether a particular house will be flown over and by how many, however it will demonstrate that there is a method and assessment framework that they can see. He acknowledged AL highlighted previously there are dis-benefits and benefits to be had across the spectrum of users and those affected.

TA said that Iteration 2 of the masterplan is currently going through Quality Assurance by the steering committee, with final comments expected by end of this week (3 December 2021). TA explained that the masterplan will be submitted to the CAA to go through their Assess and Accept process sometime next week. TA was pleased with what he'd seen in terms of what the iteration offers. He explained there will be no detailed plan on what and when the steps will be due to where airports are in the CAP1616 process, but Iteration 2 will be a detailed document nonetheless. He suggested it will be the baseline for Iteration 3 and felt optimistic that this would land well and be widely understood.

MC asked TA if there were any difficulties in the timelines.

TA responded that they had had bi-weekly meetings and had considered the drafts and comments from the October Steering Committee, and felt confident that the strategic and data assurances were in place. TA confirmed the Masterplan should be with TJ CAA early next week. AL asked if ACOG had solved the problem of intersections in the lower airspace. AL reiterated his view that there will be significant differences in vertical profile due to mixed fleets and weather variability meaning aircraft will not fly in narrow departure tubes vertically, and there may not be room for tubes to cross safely in lower airspace in an automated system. He felt that this is a fundamental issue if not resolved.

TA explained that there were broad trade-offs, variables and efficiencies. Airports are looking at their design concept and their interdependencies and how to maximise their options. He said ACOG are looking at the art of the possible and that it is fiendishly difficult, though Iteration 2 will offer some ways of addressing these issues.

Chris Gadsen (CD) said he believes that the best things in context of decarb is continuous climb and descent as steeply as safely possible and practicable and that this is also good for noise. CD said he felt quite comfortable with flying a few more miles if it avoids communities and saves people from noise. He believed a few more miles on the ground early on is not significant compared to miles in the air. CD was concerned that about getting caught up in something that is not that impactful. He believed the real trade off debate is how we go around communities, and the real opportunity is making the most out of aircraft abilities.

TA agreed with CD He added that it is about the routing to avoid communities affected by one or more airports and that this is what ACOG will be looking at when Iteration 2 is published.

PB asked if a technical paper would be part of the Masterplan or produced separately.

TA responded that he is supportive of a technical paper, but did not commit to it being part of the Masterplan. TA stated that if a technical paper was produced by the CAA/NERL, he would be happy to include it in the library of resources available on the One Sky One Plan microsite.

**\*Note** - Post meeting engagement has ascertained that the 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration of the Airspace Masterplan contains a section on operational concepts that will help to address this action. ACOG will add further documentation to their website in due course to aid understanding of this topic and will engage with stakeholders on it.

#### **Agenda Item 4: NATS Update on Free Route Airspace Deployment, Martin Rolfe**

Martin Rolfe (MR) took the ASB through slides about Free Route Airspace, focussing on what is happening now and what is happening in future years.

MR explained what Free Route Airspace (FRA) is, saying that it essentially allows airlines to plan and fly direct routes between an entry and exit point rather than having to follow a structured route, making it more efficient. He said it is mostly used in high level airspace, and it brings CO2 benefits, time benefits, and distributes flights better. He explained that it is more effective at higher than lower airspace, and still incorporates all the rules you would expect in keeping aircraft under control of air traffic control.

MR set out that there are four upcoming FRA deployments in the UK, with the first happening on 2 December, the second in – 2023, the third in 2025 which will be in the middle of the country, and the fourth in the South East and central part of the UK. He explained the deployments are all in line with the airspace modernisation policy and processes, following the normal CAP1616 process and delivered on current operational systems. He added that they are also integrated with European activities. MR explained that deployment one is in line with Borealis (a group of nine northern European countries) which allows a whole swathe of airspace to exist over 24,500ft, and that a massive amount of airspace is covered, which is significantly busy.

MR said the first deployment on 2 December is at 24,500ft and is expected to save around 12kt of CO2 per annum. He said this will allow all operators who use that airspace, not just domestic, to plan the most efficient routes possible. MR confirmed NATS is coordinating with all partners to do that.

MR said NATS is also deploying a small bit of FRA in the northern corner of the French Brest airspace. NATS and DSNA (French airspace provider) and the Irish airspace provider have all collaborated. He explained that while it looks tiny, it allows the Bay of Biscay and northern France to become FRA and allows them to save around 25kt of CO2 a year.

MR confirmed NATS had finished consulting on free route deployment two - western approaches to the UK, including a lot of the trans-Atlantic arrivals. He mentioned there are two airspace deployments related here: one at 25,000ft and above and a more structured route in the lower airspace between 7,000ft and 25,000ft. Number of options posed in the consultation which closed on 29 November. MR said NATS will look at responses now, and that the consultation link is still available for interest. MR confirmed it is on track for a March 2023 implementation, and added that the amount of time to make airspace change is significant. This is a relatively straightforward airspace change, but about five years from start to finish. MR thanked those who have contributed to the consultation.



IE asked if this creates the opportunity for airlines to operate on FRA and plan their routes, and how is engagement going with airlines on that and do you feel they are ready to go and plan or is there further work to be done?

MR said there had been a lot of work with Europe and globally with most airlines. He added that NATS are not the first to introduce FRA in Europe and that most airlines are used to planning FRA, but NATS will spend time with those airlines most affected. MR believed that easyJet will be less effected on these particular two cases. He felt there had been generally good engagement, and explained that there is a period of understanding what the best routes are. MR confirmed NATS is in touch with airlines all the time.

CG flagged that airlines deal with this across Europe already. He felt in general, the hard bit is with ANSPs compared with airlines and it is unusual for airlines to struggle to keep up with what ANSPs are doing. He felt there may be small corners of the aviation market who are harder to engage with and Government will have to make decisions on that.

### **Agenda Item 5: AOB**

MC – highlighted that next year while the CAA is reviewing AMS, DfT will be reviewing this Board to ensure that the purpose and structure are appropriate, and we would welcome input. He confirmed that DfT will be speaking to ASB members in due course.

AL raised his view that there is not up to date Government planning policy with respect to aviation, which he felt meant people are resorting to using expensive lawyers and consultants to determine whether the recommendations from the Climate Change Committee are likely to, or will become policy. He said believed that this is a waste of time and money, and made a plea for aviation policy to be updated urgently to recognise the need for a truly sustainable approach.

AL then raised, in respect of the CAA and CAP1616, that he believes that the CAA does not have a process by which the environmental impacts of airspace change arising from CAP1616 can be monitored after the event versus a baseline during PIRs. He said he felt there is no equivalent of a planning tool to inform decision-making. He believed a review to facilitate what is going to happen during the entire FASI process was needed, as he felt otherwise again an impact assessment could become very controversial and get very expensive. MC acknowledged these points.

MC thanked members for attending and for input. MC reiterated that this is a major priority for the Government and will continue to progress on areas addressed and others. He highlighted that the next meeting will be in the new year and DfT will confirm when a date is set.