



HM Revenue  
& Customs



Border Force

# Aerodrome Designation Status

October 2020

This guidance is for aerodrome owners and operators. It explains the different custom status' for aerodromes and the associated restrictions.

A flight's origin or destination affects the type of UK aerodrome it can use.

**Designated Customs and Excise Aerodromes:** May handle flights to and from any location under section 21 of the Customs & Excise Management Act 1979.

**Aerodromes holding a Certificate of Agreement (CoA):** For customs purposes certain non-designated Customs and Excise aerodromes operate under a CoA managed by Border Force's National Frontiers Approval Unit (NFAU). The agreement sets out what flights the airfield may handle and, where applicable, any permitted customs operations that may take place e.g. the permanent importation of an aircraft.

**Non-designated aerodromes without an existing Certificate of Agreement (CoA):**

On 31 December 2020 the United Kingdom transition period with the European Union will end. This means that some controls will be placed on the movement of goods and people between the UK and the EU. Section 21 (1) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 provides the legal basis for the UK Customs Authorities to allow aircraft to land or depart from anywhere other than a Designated Customs and Excise aerodrome.

Non-Customs and Excise designated aerodromes (i.e. smaller aerodromes and air strips currently receiving general aviation flights operating to and from EU countries) will require a Certificate of Agreement (CoA) issued by the NFAU to continue handling these flights once the transition period ends.

In order to maintain border security and compliance HMRC, Border Force and the DfT are introducing an 'interim' CoA that will be issued to aerodromes for a period of 18 months. The CoA will cover flights into and out of non-Customs and Excise designated aerodromes. This will allow aerodromes to legally handle all international passenger flights. Failure to obtain a standard, individual CoA from the NFAU by **1 July 2022** will result in aerodromes being limited to handling domestic flights only.

As part of the transitional arrangements, Border Force and HMRC will be contacting aerodromes that have been identified as operating flights to and from the EU or within the Common Travel Area (CTA) within the last 12 months. Aerodromes will receive an official letter from HMRC setting out the changes. This will be followed up by a call from the Border Force Team responsible for the aerodrome to arrange an Inspection visit.

For a CoA application to be processed, Border Force will require the following information to be made available during their inspection visit:

- A general outline of the type of flights using the aerodrome i.e. chartered flights, private flights, training flights, aircraft maintenance flights, cargo flights etc and the types of aircraft using the aerodrome such as propeller, helicopters, gliders, gyrocopters, jet aircraft etc.
- The approximate number and origin of the flights handled i.e. UK domestic, Intra EU, Non-EU (including the Channel Islands) per annum.
- Details of all third-party operators at the airfield and the nature of their business e.g. is the airfield used for the maintenance/repair of aircraft?
- Whether the flights handled carry anything other than passengers e.g. firearms, pets, freight, etc.
- Details as to whether facilities are available for Border Force to undertake examinations or for passengers to make a customs declaration.
- Details as to whether the airfield is used to import aircraft permanently or for repair/maintenance etc.
- Details as to whether the airfield is used as a refuelling stop for flights destined for another country.

Border Force will undertake an inspection of the aerodrome during their visit and ascertain relevant details of the aerodrome with the owner which will form part of the CoA application. On completion of the inspection visit aerodrome owners seeking CoA approval will need to officially write to the NFAU, so their CoA application can be considered.

On receipt of a completed CoA application and relevant documentation from the aerodrome owner the NFAU will process applications and liaise directly with the aerodrome owner to determine suitability for approval and the issuing of a CoA.

From 1 January 2021 until 30 June 2022 all non-Customs and Excise designated aerodromes will be covered by an interim CoA which will allow aerodromes to continue operating permitted flights to and from EU countries and operate under the cover of a 'National High Level' agreement. The restrictions are as follows;

No	Interim national Certificate of Agreement (CoA) restrictions
1.	Restricted to the handling of General Aviation flights only i.e. the handling of international scheduled/chartered flights is not permitted.
2.	Restrictions on the number of travellers arriving in an aircraft based on the ability to safely control the number of passengers.
3.	The importation or exportation of international freight/cargo subject to any form of duty, levy or other customs charge or other formality including any form of licensing requirements is not permitted. Cargo must be handled at a Customs and Excise designated airport.
4.	The importation or exportation of Merchandise in Baggage (i.e. goods carried for commercial purposes by passengers in accompanied baggage on private aircraft from/to Third Countries requiring customs clearance) is not permitted. Merchandise in Baggage must be handled at a Customs and Excise designated airport.
5.	Airports/Airfields/Aerodromes will be required to allow access to enable Border Force to carry out customs duties as laid out in CEMA s33.
6.	The importation or exportation of civil aircraft is not permitted unless specific permission is granted from the Border Force National Frontier Approvals Unit (NFAU).
7.	The receipt of civil aircraft landing in the UK for refuelling only is not permitted unless specific permission is requested from the Border Force National Frontier Approvals Unit (NFAU).

HMRC legislation advises that an aircraft can only land at approved aerodromes or airstrips. It is the responsibility of the aerodrome operator to comply with the conditions of the CoA and to ensure they do not accept aircraft/flights that are not permitted under its terms.

As per CEMA 1979, Section 21 (6), any person contravening or failing to comply with any provision of the 'Control of movement of aircraft into and out of the UK' shall be liable on summary conviction. Please note that there are penalties in place for failing to comply with any provisions of CEMA and this could lead to imprisonment in certain circumstances.

**Non-designated aerodromes without an existing Certificate of Agreement (CoA) after 30 June 2022:**

If an aerodrome owner wishes to consult with Border Force regarding CoA designation after the 30 June 2022 then they must contact the Border Force National Frontiers Unit at: [nationalfrontierapprovalsunit@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:nationalfrontierapprovalsunit@homeoffice.gov.uk)