
DIRECTIONS

CIVIL AVIATION

The Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2026

The Secretary of State makes these Directions in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 66(1), 68 and 104(2) of the Transport Act 2000^(a).

Citation, commencement and application

1.—(1) These Directions may be cited as the Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2026 and come into force on 1st October 2026.

(2) These Directions are given to the CAA.

Interpretation

2. In these Directions—

“the Act” means the Transport Act 2000;

“Airports NPS” means the national policy statement relating to airports designated under section 5 of the Planning Act 2008^(b);

“airspace change” means a permanent or temporary change to airspace design or an airspace trial;

“airspace design” means the structures of airspace and the routes and flight procedures within it;

“airspace trial” means changes to airspace design, or ATC operational procedures (which if subsequently made permanent would constitute a relevant PPR), for a fixed duration for the purposes of—

- (a) investigating the feasibility of, or validating proposals for, innovative airspace design, technology or ATC operational procedures, or
- (b) assessing their performance and effect, or
- (c) supporting the development and integration of new airspace user groups into UK airspace;

“AMS” means the UK’s Airspace Modernisation Strategy, being a coordinated strategy for the use of all UK airspace for air navigation;

“ANSP” means Air Navigation Service Provider, being a person who provides air traffic services as holder of a licence granted under section 6 of the Act or of an exemption granted under section 4 of the Act;

“ATC” means Air Traffic Control;

^(a) 2000 c.38.

^(b) 2008 c.29.

“CAA” means the Civil Aviation Authority;

“delivery plan” means a plan for the delivery of an airspace change that the CAA can require a sponsor to prepare;

“flight procedures” means standardised pre-defined routes or manoeuvres established to support the safe and efficient flow of traffic;

“JANSC” means the Joint Air Navigation Services Council;

“MoD” means the Ministry of Defence;

“new airspace user groups” means new users of UK airspace such as spaceports, unmanned aircraft systems and advanced air mobility;

“NOTAM” means a Notice to Aviation published in the UK AIP;

“planned and permanent” means other than a day-to-day or at-the-time decision taken by an air traffic controller or other decision maker;

“planning condition” means a condition to a planning permission or a requirement imposed by a development consent order;

“planning obligation” means an obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990^(a), section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997^(b) or section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011^(c);

“planning process” means the process of preparing and making an application for planning permission or for a development consent order;

“PPR” means planned and permanent redistribution of air traffic through changes in ATC operational procedure;

“relevant PPR” means a PPR which falls within the description in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to these Directions;

“sponsor” means a person who makes an airspace change proposal to the CAA, or a person who develops such a proposal with a view to making it to the CAA;

“UK AIP” means the Aeronautical Information Publication for the United Kingdom; and

“UK airspace” means airspace in managed areas (which has the meaning given in section 72(3) of the Act (interpretation)).

Airspace design, use and management

3.—(1) The CAA must—

- (a) develop and keep under review a national policy for UK airspace design which—
 - (i) reflects the AMS;
 - (ii) seeks to ensure that the volume of controlled airspace is the minimum required to maintain a high standard of air safety and, subject to overriding national security or defence requirements, secures the most efficient use of airspace;
- (b) publish that policy;

(a) 1990 c.8.
 (b) 1997 c.8.
 (c) 2011 c.25.

- (c) make decisions on UK airspace design in accordance with the published policy;
 - (d) regularly consider if UK airspace design should be reviewed;
 - (e) where a review of UK airspace design is undertaken, in consultation with the relevant airspace users, consider whether UK airspace design reflects sub-paragraph (a);
 - (f) following a review under sub-paragraph (e), determine if—
 - (i) the policy,
 - (ii) UK airspace design,
 or both, should be amended and, if so, amend in the manner it considers appropriate taking into account the findings of the review;
 - (g) in respect of UK airspace—
 - (i) develop, maintain and publish rules, guidelines, technical design criteria and common procedures for the use of UK airspace;
 - (ii) develop, maintain and publish a national policy for the management of UK airspace consistent with the international obligations of the UK;
 - (iii) maintain and keep under review arrangements for the management of UK airspace, including arrangements enabling the flexible use of airspace by civil and military users; and
 - (iv) oversee the implementation of the arrangements referred to in sub-paragraph (iii);
 - (h) ensure that an Aeronautical Information Service is provided for UK airspace, the form and content of the UK AIP being the responsibility of the CAA, in accordance with international obligations (including Annex 15 to the International Convention on Civil Aviation); and
 - (i) ensure that NOTAMs which are required to maintain high safety standards are published.
- (2) The CAA must—
- (a) maintain and keep under review the AMS and consult the Secretary of State in relation to it;
 - (b) ensure that the AMS reflects Government priorities set out in the Airports NPS and any other relevant Government aviation policy; and
 - (c) annually report to the Secretary of State on the delivery of the AMS.

Proposals for airspace design changes: procedure and guidance

4.—(1) The CAA must develop and publish procedures, and guidance on such procedures, for the development, making and consideration of a proposal for—

- (a) a permanent change to airspace design;
 - (b) a temporary change to airspace design; or
 - (c) an airspace trial.
- (2) Procedures developed and published under paragraph 4(1) must—
- (a) be proportionate, reflect Government policies and aim to expedite such proposals;
 - (b) include information on what evidence or type of evidence a sponsor can make use of in their proposal and would be acceptable to the CAA, for example the acceptability of information prepared, and consultation undertaken, by the sponsor in connection with a planning process;
 - (c) require a sponsor to demonstrate how a proposal has taken account of any relevant Government planning policy, planning condition or obligation;

- (d) in relation to a proposal for a permanent or temporary change to airspace design, include provision for consultation with, or the giving of information to, persons likely to be affected by the proposed change;
 - (e) in relation to a proposal for an airspace trial, include provision for the giving of information to persons likely to be affected by the proposed trial;
 - (f) set out the circumstances where, and manner in which, the CAA may require a sponsor to prepare, in consultation with the Secretary of State, a delivery plan and what that delivery plan must include.
- (3) The CAA must publish a prioritisation principles document which sets out its approach to the consideration of airspace change proposals, including how it will prioritise those submitted to it for decision, and which must take into account—
- (a) the AMS;
 - (b) the priority to be given to urgent safety and national security proposals;
 - (c) the Airports NPS and any relevant Government aviation policy;
 - (d) any delivery plan required by the CAA.
- (4) The CAA must determine a proposal for a permanent or temporary change to airspace design taking account of the AMS and its procedures and guidance published under paragraph 4(1)(a) or (b) as appropriate; and—
- (a) the CAA may make its approval of a proposal subject to such modifications and conditions as the CAA considers necessary;
 - (b) where the CAA approves a proposal, it must either make a change to the UK AIP or issue a NOTAM to give effect to the approved airspace change;
 - (c) a temporary change approved by the CAA is to last for such fixed period as the CAA considers appropriate, which is normally not to be more than 180 consecutive days unless the CAA determines otherwise.
- (5) The CAA must determine a proposal for an airspace trial in accordance with its procedures and guidance published under paragraph 4(1)(c) on airspace trials; and—
- (a) the CAA may make its approval of an airspace trial subject to such modifications and conditions as the CAA considers necessary;
 - (b) where the CAA approves a proposal, it must either make a change to the UK AIP or issue a NOTAM to give effect to the approved airspace trial;
 - (c) an airspace trial approved by the CAA is to last for such fixed period as the CAA considers appropriate, which is normally not to be more than 3 years unless the CAA determines otherwise;
 - (d) the CAA may, where the CAA considers it appropriate, safe, and practical to do so, require an airspace trial to end before the end of the period for which it was approved.

Secretary of State's call-in and determination of a proposed permanent airspace change

5.—(1) The Secretary of State may determine a proposal for a permanent airspace change by calling in that proposal where the Secretary of State determines that the proposal meets the call-in criterion as defined in paragraph 5(13).

(2) This direction does not apply to a request to determine a proposal submitted by or on behalf of the MoD.

(3) Where the CAA receives a request to refer a proposal for a permanent change to airspace design to the Secretary of State for determination on the ground that the proposal meets the call-in criterion, the CAA must notify the Secretary of State of the request.

(4) After notifying the Secretary of State under paragraph 5(3), the CAA must consider whether the proposal meets the call-in criterion and must inform the Secretary of State of its view within three weeks of receipt of the request.

(5) In considering under paragraph 5(4) whether the proposal meets the call-in criterion the CAA must take account of any guidance given to it by the Secretary of State for that purpose.

(6) Where the CAA has notified the Secretary of State of its view that a proposal meets the call-in criterion, the Secretary of State must consider whether to call in the proposal. Where a call-in request is submitted more than 6 weeks after the airspace change proposal has been received by the CAA, the Secretary of State can refuse to determine the proposal even if the call-in criterion is met.

(7) Within 3 months of receipt of a request under paragraph 5(3), the Secretary of State must give notice to the CAA of their decision either requiring the CAA to refer the proposal to the Secretary of State for determination or refusing to determine the proposal.

(8) If the Secretary of State decides to call the proposal in for determination, the CAA must—

- (a) review the proposal and decide whether, were it determining the proposal, it would be minded to approve it (with or without modification or conditions); and
- (b) refer the proposal to the Secretary of State accompanied by a statement of its decision (including the reasons for that decision) under sub-paragraph (a).

(9) Subject to paragraph 5(10), the Secretary of State must—

- (a) determine the proposal within 3 months of the date of receipt of the reference under paragraph 5(8)(b); and
- (b) notify the CAA of the Secretary of State's determination.

(10) The Secretary of State may extend the period for determining the proposal under paragraph 5(9) by a further period of up to 3 months.

(11) If the Secretary of State has not determined the proposal within the period provided for in paragraph 5(9) or 5(10), the referral to the Secretary of State lapses and the proposal must be determined by the CAA.

(12) The procedures for consideration of a permanent change to airspace design published by the CAA under Direction 4, and the provisions of paragraph 4(5), apply (with the necessary modifications) to a determination by the Secretary of State under this Direction as they apply to a determination by the CAA.

(13) For the purpose of this Direction, the “call-in criterion” is that the proposed change is of strategic national importance.

Proposed planned and permanent redistribution of air traffic

6.—(1) Subject to paragraph 6(7), the CAA must develop and publish procedures, and guidance on such procedures, for the development, consideration, and determination of proposals for relevant PPRs of air traffic, as set out in Schedule 1 to these Directions.

(2) A procedure developed and published under paragraph 6(1) must—

- (a) reflect relevant Government policy and be proportionate; and
- (b) require an ANSP to refer a proposal for a relevant PPR to the CAA for approval before the PPR is implemented.

(3) The CAA must determine whether to approve a proposal for a relevant PPR taking account of the AMS, and its procedures and guidance published under paragraph 6(1).

(4) The CAA may make its approval of a proposal subject to such modifications and conditions as it considers necessary.

(5) The CAA must provide a report to the Secretary of State annually outlining, for each proposal for a relevant PPR referred to it, the specific type of PPR, the relevant airport, and whether it was approved.

(6) When considering a proposal for a relevant PPR, the CAA must have regard to any relevant guidance or further information published by the Secretary of State on PPRs.

(7) This Direction does not apply to a PPR proposed by or on behalf of the MoD.

Lower airspace service

7.—(1) In consultation with the Secretary of State the CAA is to determine the extent and coverage needed for a Flight Information Service for lower UK airspace (“the Service”), publish the details of the Service in the AMS and procure and administer the Service.

(2) The CAA is to keep the provision of the Service under review and report to the Secretary of State at least every 3 years on—

- (a) the extent and coverage which it considers suitable for the Service in the UK;
- (b) the costs and benefits of the Service; and
- (c) the CAA’s advice as to how the Service should be funded.

(3) The report referred to in paragraph 7(2) must be provided—

- (a) by 31 October 2029; and
- (b) subsequently on the third anniversary of such report and of every subsequent report.

Aeronautical radio frequencies and secondary surveillance radar codes

8. The CAA must both monitor the use of, and application of national policy in respect of the assignment of, civil aeronautical radio frequencies and Secondary Surveillance Radar codes in accordance with the international obligations of the United Kingdom.

Provision of meteorological services

9. The CAA must arrange for the provision of a meteorological service for international air navigation on behalf of the UK in order to discharge the UK’s obligations in Annex 3 to the International Convention on Civil Aviation.

Lost communications

10.—(1) The CAA must—

- (a) monitor incidents of lost communications between ground-based civil air traffic controllers and civilian pilots;
- (b) investigate the cause and effect of those incidents referred to in sub-paragraph (a) which result in a quick reaction alert notification;
- (c) provide pilots with a proportionate ongoing awareness program on the need for pilots to follow correct communication requirements and the risks of not doing so; and
- (d) provide the Secretary of State with an annual report of the investigations referred to in sub-paragraph (b) to include—
 - (i) the number of incidents and the results of the CAA’s findings as to cause and effect;
 - (ii) a statement on the actions the CAA has taken to reduce the likelihood of such events occurring in the future; and

- (iii) information and guidance for pilots to reduce the likelihood of such events occurring in the future.

(2) The report referred to in paragraph 10(1)(d) must be provided by 30 June each year covering the year ending 31 March of that year.

Relationship with the Secretary of State for Defence

11.—(1) The CAA must make arrangements with the MoD for the MoD's role in the joint and integrated civil and military provision of air traffic services.

(2) The CAA is to ensure that such arrangements are documented in a Memorandum of Understanding between the CAA and the MoD.

(3) The CAA is to make arrangements with the MoD for the CAA to second and resource an appropriate number of personnel from the MoD, of the appropriate rank and experience, to contribute to the CAA's work on airspace-related matters.

(4) The CAA is to ensure that such arrangements are documented in a Resource and Interface Arrangement between the CAA and the MoD.

(5) Without prejudice to section 67 of the Act, paragraphs 11(6) to 11(8) apply where it appears to the CAA that there is a need to either increase the volume of controlled airspace or alter the classification of UK airspace where that increase or alteration might, in the opinion of the CAA or the MoD, have an adverse effect on the ability of the armed forces of the Crown to maintain their operational capability.

(6) The CAA must seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Defence before proceeding with any such change to UK airspace.

(7) Where the Secretary of State for Defence is content with the proposed change, the CAA must ensure that any such further consultation on the proposal is undertaken as required by the Secretary of State.

(8) Where the Secretary of State for Defence is not content with the proposed change, the CAA may not approve the proposed change otherwise than in accordance with directions given by the Secretary of State under section 68(3) of the Act in relation to the proposal.

Institutional arrangements, advice and support

12.—(1) The CAA is to establish and operate such institutional arrangements with regard to air navigation as the CAA considers necessary to promote the safe, effective and efficient, integrated operation of air traffic in the UK.

(2) The CAA must provide or procure the provision of such advice in relation to air navigation as the Secretary of State may reasonably require.

(3) The CAA is to provide support to the UK Airprox Board for the analysis, categorisation and understanding of pilot-reported and controller-reported risk-bearing occurrences.

Joint Air Navigation Services Council

13. The CAA is to ensure the continuation of JANSC in accordance with Schedule 2 to these Directions.

Other functions relating to the environmental impact of the use of UK airspace

14.—(1) The CAA must prepare and publish guidance for airport operators, ANSPs, aircraft operators and pilots on transparency and provision of information on—

- (a) operational changes to airspace usage by aircraft which might affect the noise impact on other persons; and
 - (b) actual routes flown by aircraft arriving and departing UK airports as compared with nominal tracks.
- (2) The CAA must establish and maintain a process to receive, classify and respond to complaints received by it in relation to the environmental impact (including noise) of the use by civil aircraft (including general aviation and new airspace users) of UK airspace.
- (3) On a request by the Secretary of State, the CAA must provide the Secretary of State with a summary of complaints received by it in relation to the matters mentioned in paragraph 14(2) during a specified period, or of complaints relating to a particular issue.

International relations

15. The CAA—

- (a) must contribute to the development of international air navigation and provide such assistance as the Secretary of State may request, including (subject to section 2(4) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982(a)) international representation on behalf of the UK;
- (b) must maintain close co-operation in relation to air navigation with international organisations and civil aviation authorities of other States; and
- (c) may consider and propose international agreements in relation to air navigation and notify the Secretary of State of any such agreements which it proposes should be concluded by the United Kingdom or whose conclusion by the CAA should be approved by the Secretary of State.

Revocation

- 16.** The Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2023 are revoked.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Transport

20th July 2026

Keir Mather
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport

(a) 1982 c. 16.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1

Direction 6

Planned and permanent redistribution of air traffic (PPR)

Types of PPRs which are relevant PPRs for the purposes of these Directions

Interpretation and scope

1. A relevant PPR is a proposed PPR which both:

- falls within one or more of Types 1, 2 or 3 below; and
- relates to an airport which has a Category C or D (or both) approach landing procedure, and/or established standard instrument departure (SID) routes published in the UK Aeronautical Information Publication.

Additional information on interpretation and scope

2. The definition of relevant PPR in paragraph 1 of this Schedule is designed to capture only Air Traffic Control (ATC) operational procedures that relate to airports at which large commercial air transport and most business jets operate, whilst not capturing aerodromes or airports used only by small non-commercial aircraft.

3. Changes to ATC operational procedures that are planned and permanent will typically be recorded in writing and given as some form of instruction to an air traffic controller. An example would be a change to an Air Navigation Service Provider's (ANSP) Manual of Air Traffic Services (MATS) Part II.

Type 1

4. A Type 1 PPR is a single PPR which is (or multiple PPRs within 24 months whose cumulative effects are) anticipated to result in a lateral shift of aircraft from the pre-existing centre line of the density of actual flight tracks by more than the horizontal distance shown in the second column of the table below in at least one of the heights shown in the first column of that table.

Height in feet above ground level (agl)	Horizontal distance from the centreline
1,000ft	300m
2,000ft	500m
3,000ft	800m
4,000ft	1,100m
5,000ft	1,300m

Additional information on Type 1

5. The figures in Table 1 are based on an approximate correlation to a 3dB change following advice from the CAA.

6. The ANSP will need to assess the lateral shift of traffic from the centre of the density of actual flight tracks^(a) to establish whether the expected lateral shift is equal to or greater than that shown in the table above. Therefore, a 1,350m shift away from the existing centreline at 5,000ft agl would be a Type 1 PPR, but not if the shift was 1,300m at 5,000ft agl. The CAA has discretion to interpolate if the height at which the change is being proposed falls in between those shown in the table above.

7. It is recognised that ANSPs make air traffic control operational changes with the best of intentions and for safety reasons need some flexibility in doing so. At the same time, uncontrolled multiple changes that individually fall below the threshold could have a cumulative impact similar to a single change that does meet the threshold. To mitigate against this possibility, if a change below the threshold is made, any further operational change(s) proposed within 24 months of the first change must be judged against the Type 1 PPR criteria by adding together the lateral shift of each change. Where the cumulative effect of changes made within a rolling 24-month period meets or exceeds the threshold set out in the table above, the change that results in the threshold being met or exceeded will be judged to have met the criteria for a Type 1 PPR and will need to be considered as such. A PPR which has already been approved by the CAA is not to be included in assessing the cumulative effect of any further change.

Type 2

8. A Type 2 PPR is a PPR which is anticipated to increase air transport movements using a Standard Instrument Departure (SID) by at least 5,000 movements per year as a result of a decision by an airport and/or its ANSP to redistribute air traffic from one SID to another, at that same airport.

Additional information on Type 2

9. A PPR shall be considered as a Type 2 PPR when there has been a conscious decision by the airport and/or its ANSP to redistribute **existing** traffic at that airport.

10. A PPR shall not be considered as a Type 2 PPR solely due to an increase in the number of air transport movements on a SID which is a direct result of changing weather patterns, or airline operations, natural growth, or as a result of agreed (i.e. through the planning system) air transport capacity enhancements at the airport.

Type 3

11. A Type 3 PPR is a PPR which results from a significant change to the written specified landing arrangements of aircraft at a UK airport referred to in paragraph 1 of this Schedule (or more than one such change within 36 months whose cumulative effects are significant).

12. “Change to the written specified landing arrangements” means a change to the established minimum, or where applicable maximum, distance of the joining point onto an airport’s Instrument Landing System (ILS) or any significant changes to the height at which aircraft must establish onto the ILS.

13. Changes to the written minimum joining point at such airports greater than a cumulative total of at least 300 feet vertically or 1 nautical mile horizontally within a rolling 36-month period will be considered as “significant” and thereby constitute a Type 3 PPR.

(a) The centre of the density of actual flight tracks shall where possible be determined or interpreted from radar data, the sample of which should be sufficiently representative (two weeks to one month of data). Where radar data is not readily available, air traffic control expert judgement should be used.

Additional information on Type 3

14. In circumstances where multiple changes made within a 36-month rolling period have the cumulative effect of meeting or exceeding the threshold set out for a Type 3 PPR, the change that results in the threshold being met or exceeded will be judged to have met the criteria for a Type 3 PPR, and will as such be considered a Type 3 PPR. A PPR which has already been approved by the CAA is not included in assessing the cumulative effect of any further change.

Power to determine whether a proposed change is a relevant PPR: consultation with the CAA

15. If there is any doubt about whether a proposed PPR falls within Type 1, 2 or 3, the ANSP, or airport as appropriate, shall consult the CAA. The CAA's decision shall be considered determinative as to whether or not the proposed PPR is considered a relevant PPR.

SCHEDULE 2

Direction 13

Joint Air Navigation Services Council

1. JANSC is the principal mechanism for maintaining high-level oversight of arrangements between the CAA, NATS (En Route) plc and the MoD, for the continued provision of joint and integrated air traffic services (J&I ATS).

2. JANSC has the responsibility of ensuring compliance with the J&I ATS obligations placed on the CAA, the MoD and NATS (En Route) plc, as detailed in the Civil Aviation Publication 740: UK Airspace Management Policy.

3. JANSC shall meet every 6 months and shall be chaired by the CAA Group Director, Safety and Airspace Regulation; with the other members of JANSC being the MoD's Head of Defence Airspace and Air Traffic Management (as representative of the MoD) and the Chief Executive of NATS Holdings Limited. Other persons may attend meetings at the request of JANSC.