

CAA's REVIEW OF THE AIRSPACE CHANGE PROCESS

Purpose of this paper

This paper seeks to summarise the main points of the CAA's current consultation on proposals for a revised airspace change process. (NB Nic Stevenson (CAA) will give a detailed presentation on the draft proposals) The consultation closes on 30 June.

Points for discussion

Delegates are reminded that it would be helpful to have comments in advance of the meeting and so facilitate a more interactive discussion.

Possible action

Whether UKACCs should submit a collective response to the consultation in addition to individual responses from ACCs.

Background

1. Members will recall that the CAA published its report on proposals for a revised airspace change process last autumn. The CAA has now issued its formal consultation which closes on 30 June. There will be a new charging scheme to ensure that the CAA has sufficient resource to operate the new process.
2. The CAA states that it needs a rigorous process for ensuring that robust and lawful decisions about airspace change proposals are taken. It notes that communities exposed to aircraft noise have been vocal in expressing opposition to changes they consider unfair. Accordingly the CAA considers that they need to rebuild confidence in the airspace change process.
3. The CAA wishes the process to be more transparent and help address the public confidence issue. It is planned that all documents will be published through an online portal. (although the CAA is willing to accept submissions in other forms). A number of process gateways will be introduced. The CAA would have to sign off the gateway before the next phase could commence. This would provide a better oversight of engagement. The process would have design principles.
4. The new process would provide clarity for sponsors and more guidance. There would also be a scaled process with agreed timelines. Impacts will be assessed in 'options appraisal' in three iterative stages (initial; developed and final). There will be no appeal mechanisms but draft decisions will be published for feedback in some cases. It had been originally suggested that there should be an oversight committee but the CAA does not intend to pursue this option.
5. There will be three categories of airspace:

- **Tier 1 Notified airspace**

1a: A permanent change to the 'notified' airspace structure

1b: A temporary change to the 'notified' airspace structure (normally less than 90 days)

1c: A temporary operational trial of a change to the 'notified' airspace structure (i.e. with the intention of introducing the change permanently)

Any of the above would be fully subject to the new guidance.

- **Tier 2 Permanent and planned redistribution of air traffic but not involving any change to the 'notified' airspace structure**

It is recognised that some ATC procedural changes can have as great an impact as a change in airspace structure. These could include:

- the way aircraft are vectored by air traffic controllers
- the way runway in use is alternated with another runway
- a procedural change likely to cause a redistribution of air traffic which is sufficient to create a certain level of noise impact for those on the ground (<7000ft), and
- the change is both permanent and planned

In such case it is understood that the Government proposes to direct CAA to require the airspace space provider to seek approval for such changes including showing appropriate engagement with relevant communities and how policy will developed on a proportionate change process

- **Tier 3 Other changes to air operations**

A change in airline or airport operations as a result of weather, commercial decisions, traffic volumes or magnetic variation, causing a noticeable shift in the distribution of flights over a period of time

These changes are expected to be processed locally without the need for any CAA approval.

Issues

6. The involvement of ACCs in the process is welcome. This will provide an opportunity for ACCs to have a defined role in the process as well as being consulted but also involved in helping the change sponsor in identifying who should be consulted and engaged in the process.
7. Concern has been expressed by some airports that the new process may result in extending the length of the process. It has also been suggested that the new process might be over burdensome for smaller airports/ACCs.
8. It has been suggested that the process would benefit from there being a point of contact at the CAA for ACCs to use for assistance on matters requiring clarification or that needed to be addressed.
9. There have been some initial views that it would be helpful for the CAA to adopt a flexible approach particularly on the classification of changes under the three tier system.
10. Some airports have asked for clarification as to how the need for Tier 3 changes will be monitored.
11. The delay in issuing the reviewed Airspace Change Process has made it difficult for some airports (e.g. Manchester) to move forward with proposed changes to its airspace as airports wish to ensure that their consultation arrangements are in conformity with the updated guidance.
12. The work of Edinburgh Airport in taking forward the second phase of its airspace change proposals, the problems encountered and how the consultation arrangements for the second phase of consultation aimed to address those problems has been noted. It has been agreed the Edinburgh ACC/airport might share their experience with delegates.
13. Delegates are invited to consider whether there are any common issues which might form the basis of a collective response to the CAA consultation.

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