

# The Airspace Change Process



## Introduction.

The CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy (DAP), as the national airspace approval and regulatory authority is responsible for airspace policy and planning in the UK. As such, the Director, Airspace Policy, is charged with approving changes to the dimensions, classification or use of UK airspace. These changes can vary from being straightforward, simple modifications that are easy to implement with little impact on airspace users, to changes that are complex, extensive and which impact on a variety of airspace users and the general public. Changes to airspace arrangements should only be made after consultation, only where it is clear that an overall environmental benefit will accrue, or where airspace management considerations and the overriding need for safety allow for no practical alternative. The process to be followed for amending the structure of airspace reflects the CAA's statutory duties as set out in the Ministerial Directions given by the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Defence under Section 66(1) of the Transport Act 2000, and the Environmental Guidance<sup>1</sup> provided by the Secretary of State for Transport. The Directions are reproduced in the Guidance which is available from the CAA website:

[www.caa.co.uk/docs/7/DTLREnvironmentalGuidance.pdf](http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/7/DTLREnvironmentalGuidance.pdf)

**The Airspace Change Process**, outlined in Civil Aviation Publication (CAP) 724 – *The Airspace Charter* and CAP 725 – *CAA Guidance on the Application of the Airspace Change*

<sup>1</sup> Guidance to the CAA on Environmental Objectives relating to the Exercise of its Air Navigation Functions, given by the Secretary of State for Transport under Section 70(2)(d) of the Transport Act 2000.

Process is available from the CAA website:

[www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/cap724.pdf](http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/cap724.pdf)

[www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/cap725.pdf](http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/cap725.pdf)

## Roles & Responsibilities

The Change Sponsor:

- Owns, and is responsible for developing, the Airspace Change Proposal (ACP).
- Is accountable for identifying the stakeholders to be engaged during the consultation exercise.
- Designs and carries out consultation on the operational and environmental impacts of the proposed airspace change.
- Is accountable for the decisions to modify or not modify its proposed airspace design in light of the responses to the consultation exercise.

The CAA as Regulator:

- Owns, and is fully responsible for, the Airspace Change Process.
- Provides assistance on the application of the Process and guidance on fulfilling the operational, environmental and consultation requirements.
- Scrutinises and assesses the Formal Airspace Change Proposal against the regulatory requirements.
- Approves/Rejects the Formal Proposal.
- Is accountable for the regulatory decision-making.

**The stages of the Airspace Change Process are outlined below.**

**Stage 1 – Framework Briefing.** DAP representatives meet with the Change Sponsor to discuss the embryonic proposal, and highlight key stages and requirements of the Airspace Change Process. It provides the opportunity to discuss the structure of the formal ACP submission, as well as environmental and consultation requirements. A DAP Case Officer will be appointed.

**Stage 2 – Proposal Development.** The Change Sponsor develops initial draft proposals before conducting stakeholder analysis to identify 'people or groups of people who are, or might be, affected - either positively and negatively - by any action taken by the Change Sponsor'. The proposal is then developed by utilising such methods as Stakeholder Focus Groups. This leads to final design option(s) for consultation. At this stage, an Environmental Assessment of the proposal will be initiated which will be completed before the proposal goes to consultation.

**Stage 3 – Preparing for Consultation.** The Change Sponsor decides on the most appropriate consultation methodology needed to reach all consultees. These methods could include: questions in written consultation documents, Consultation questionnaires or questionnaire-based surveys, using Representative Groups, Focus Groups and Open/Public Meetings. DAP will monitor and advise the Change Sponsor on the scope and conduct of the consultation to be undertaken. However, it remains the Change Sponsor's responsibility to ensure that the

appropriate level of consultation is undertaken. This is a factor that will be taken into account during the Regulatory Decision taken at stage 5. Throughout, consultation must be undertaken in accordance with the **HM Government Code of Practice on Consultation**, which highlights seven criteria:

- **When to consult**

Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

- **Duration of consultation exercises**

Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

- **Clarity of scope and impact**

Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

- **Accessibility of consultation exercises**

Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

- **The burden of consultation**

Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

- **Responsiveness of consultation exercises**

Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

- **Capacity to consult**

Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

#### **Stage 4 – Consultation and Formal Proposal Submission.**

The Change Sponsor distributes consultation material and conducts other consultation activities. Following the minimum 12-week consultation period, the Change Sponsor collates and analyses all responses and then decides on the final proposal. This may include airspace design modifications decided upon in light of the consultation responses. This may, in turn, lead to additional consultation that could last another 12 weeks. The Change Sponsor is required to publish feedback to consultees including information on how the final decision on the option selected was reached. The Sponsor will then submit a Formal Airspace Change Proposal to DAP.

**Stage 5 – Regulatory Decision.** DAP staff undertake a detailed assessment of the Formal Proposal in the form of a Case Study. The DAP Case Officer may seek clarification or supplementary information from the sponsor before making a recommendation to the Director of Airspace Policy on whether the proposal should be approved. The Director of Airspace Policy then makes a Regulatory Decision in accordance with the CAA's statutory obligations. The Change Sponsor is informed of the decision and this results in either the proposal moving to implementation or the Change Sponsor modifying the proposal for re-submission. In the case of the latter, it is likely that further consultation will be required.

**Stage 6 – Implementation.** Once the change is formally approved, the Change Sponsor will prepare changes to operational procedures and submit amendment to aeronautical information publications. Changes to aeronautical procedures, airspace structures and regulations are timed to start on internationally specified Aeronautical Information Regulation And Control (AIRAC) dates, which occur every 28 days. This ensures that the aviation community, as a whole, is aware of the changes and can prepare. Larger airspace changes may require a period of at

least 2 AIRAC cycles, i.e. 56 days, before they can be implemented following regulatory approval.

**Stage 7 – Operational Review.** DAP will undertake an operational review of the change approximately 12 months after implementation. The purpose of the Review is to determine if the airspace change, as approved, has been implemented and whether the anticipated benefits have materialised. Once complete, the findings of the review will be published on the CAA website.

**Summary.** The Airspace Change Process ensures that changes to the airspace structure or its use in the UK meet CAA regulatory requirements in respect of safety, consultation, environmental and operational factors, compliance with airspace design criteria, as well as ensuring that the proposal is operationally justified. The 7-stage process ensures that any proposal is properly developed, consulted upon and evaluated to ensure that it delivers the required benefits in terms of safety and airspace capacity, and the environmental impact of the proposal is fully understood.