

Directorate of Airspace Policy



All NATMAC Representatives Environmental Consultees

02 October 2012

ERM/NATS-IAA IRISH SEA ACP Pt3

Dear Stakeholders,

CAA DECISION LETTER

NATS/IAA PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF NEW CDR (U)Y124

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

- 1.1 On 11th February 2011, Information Notice IN-2011/08 provided details of a NATS and Directorate of Airspace Policy Framework Briefing on a proposal to introduce improvements to the Irish Sea airspace structure. The scope of the proposal was split into 5 largely separate sub-proposals in the same geographic area centred on the Isle of Man ATC Sector. Each sub-proposal has its own specific objectives. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the UK/Ireland Functional Airspace Block (FAB) principles. A FAB is an airspace block based on operational requirements and established regardless of State boundaries, where the provision of air navigation services and related functions are performance-driven and optimized with a view to introducing, in each functional airspace block, enhanced cooperation among air navigation service providers or, where appropriate, an integrated provider. The main driver for this proposal is the need to ensure that the airspace structure in the UK Flight Information Region (FIR) meets the needs of changes being made by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), the Irish air navigation service provider (ANSP), in the Dublin Terminal Manoeuvring Area (TMA). The IAA seeks to improve its operational and environmental efficiency by radically changing their airspace structure around Dublin airport, including new departure routes and implementation of a new method of managing arrival streams called Point-Merge. The proximity of the Dublin TMA to the London and Scottish boundaries means that changes in UK airspace are required to support those in the Shannon FIR and continue the development of the UK/Ireland FAB.
- 1.2 Sub-proposal 3 is for the establishment of a Class C controlled airspace Conditional Route (CDR) UY124 and coincident Class C ATS route Y124, which will be introduced under flexible use of airspace (FUA) arrangements and will provide an additional eastbound only route for Dublin departures for use during the busy morning and evening periods and weekends, and for overflights from Shannon ACC. These routes start at DEXEN on the FIR boundary and route to

the (U)Y53¹ intersection at MOGTA. Birmingham and East Midlands RNAV standard arrival routes (STARs) will now commence at AMPIT and a route restriction will be put in place to enhance traffic flows and prevent the use of (U)124 for Heathrow arrivals via Bovingdon. As a conditional route, UY124 will promulgated as active H24² for eastbound traffic above flight level (FL)295, controlled by London Area Control Sectors 7 and 4 (LAC S7 and S4); the lowest usable eastbound level being FL310. UY124 may be closed due to activation of the North Wales Military Training Area North High (NWMTA (N) High) in accordance with the procedures laid down in both the Civil and Military aeronautical information publications. The coincident airway Y124, will be promulgated as active outside the routine operational hours of the NWMTA(N) Low, available below FL245. However, Y124 can also be made available on a tactical basis when NWMTA(N) Low is closed for any reason during promulgated hours of activity. Dublin departures using Y124 will be transferred to Prestwick Centre (PC) IOM Sector and coordinated through Standing Agreements with LAC S7. The DEXEN Buffer annotated on the chart at Enclosure 1 is to allow coincident eastbound flows of traffic on parallel airways released to PC IOM controllers from separate Dublin ATC sectors.

- 1.3 Within existing regulated controlled airspace southeast of Wallasey, rationalisation of routes UL10, L10 and L8 will be undertaken to ensure alignment of existing lower and upper ATS routes is completed and thereby providing increased flexibility and more efficient flight planning options for domestic routes.

2. AIRSPACE EFFICIENCY

- 2.1 I am required to secure the most efficient use of airspace consistent with the safe operation of aircraft and the expeditious flow of air traffic. I am satisfied that the new CDR will reduce the number of interactions that ATC are required to manage, reducing complexity in the PC IOM Sector and LAC S7, which would in turn reduce the likelihood of delays being generated by these busy sectors. It will facilitate the need of the Irish Aviation Authority for an additional eastbound route for Dublin outbounds during busy morning and evening periods and for Shannon FIR overflights from the Atlantic. The rationalisation of the airspace structure southeast of Wallasey will also improve the overall efficiency of operations and provide better flight plan connectivity for operators.

3. AIRSPACE USERS

- 3.1 I am required to satisfy the requirements of operators and owners of all classes of aircraft. Due to the nature of this proposal, NATS completed a comprehensive consultation exercise as part of the overall Irish Sea changes with all affected stakeholder groups. The British Gliding Authority (BGA) raised concerns over a perceived impact on recreational gliding in the designated high level Welsh gliding areas. NATS have therefore revised the extant Letter of Agreement, which now introduces an additional gliding area that provides the BGA with unobstructed access to the high level areas and introduces a 2-hour 'clawback' arrangement that deactivates the operation of (U)Y124. The MoD has been fully involved in this sub-proposal and fully supports the development that has been introduced in accordance with FUA principles.

¹ (U) designator for upper and lower routes together

² 24 hours but conditional on other airspace activity

- 3.2 I am also satisfied that the initial concerns raised over the introduction of additional CAS west of Holyhead have been adequately mitigated, in that any General Aviation (GA) aircraft can still access the areas on a VFR clearance through Class C airspace.

4. INTERESTS OF OTHER PARTIES

- 4.1 I am also required to take account of the interests of any other person (other than an operator or owner of an aircraft) in relation to the use of any particular airspace or the use of airspace generally. Although the route overflies a National Park and an AONB³, I am satisfied that the operational benefits provided by this proposal outweigh the concerns raised by some non-aviation stakeholders over the potential impact on tranquillity, especially as all overflying traffic will be at least 3 miles high and most should be considerably higher and noise levels, although audible, are expected to be very low.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 I have considered the environmental impact of air operations and concluded that there is no impact on noise as a result of this sub-proposal, as affected traffic will be at FL195 and above and noise levels at this height cannot be modelled with any degree of accuracy. There is also no impact on local air quality or biodiversity although there will be additional traffic over National Parks and AONBs at FL195 and above. A quantified CO₂ reduction is expected but the scale of the reduction will depend on whether the Basic or the Short-Term Option is implemented. There may also be other unquantifiable reductions as a result of this sub-proposal. Some traffic operates in this area on a tactical basis today and the area is routinely used at lower levels by the MoD for training purposes.

6. SAFETY

- 6.1 As my primary duty is to maintain a high degree of safety in the provision of air traffic services, my staff, together with colleagues from the Safety Regulation Group of the CAA have confirmed that the proposed airspace design and associated management arrangements can be safely adopted. The appropriate safety management processes resulting from this airspace change will be completed prior to the introduction of any operational change and thus safety levels will be maintained.

7. NATIONAL SECURITY

- 7.1 I am satisfied that national security will not be impacted by this proposal and the specific consultation requirements with the Secretary of State for Defence have been discharged by correspondence with the MoD who has confirmed it is content with the proposal.

³ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

8.1 REGULATORY DECISION

- 8.1 I am satisfied that the new airspace arrangements will provide more efficient options for both Dublin eastbound departures during busy periods and will also help to address the complexity of the existing airspace structure, whilst improving the interaction between particular Prestwick and London Sectors. Additionally, the introduction of better flight-planning options and increased route connectivity serve to introduce a more flexible airspace structure that can help overcome delay issues. I am content that NATS have put in place a modified airspace structure that does not necessarily disadvantage other airspace users. The 'do nothing' option would not have addressed the difficult interactions that exist today and any other options would have either overflowed a greater area of the Snowdonia National Park, or would have not provided adequate and safe separation from existing routes. I am therefore satisfied that the single option put forward in the consultation was the only viable option, as it provided operational benefits and a reduction in CO₂ emissions.
- 8.2 I have therefore decided to approve the introduction of these new routes that will help to provide greater operational flexibility for overflights and additional routing for Dublin eastbound departures. The revised airspace will become effective from 13 December 2012. My staff will review the effectiveness of the arrangements not before 12 months after introduction and the results of this review will be published.
- 8.3 If you have any queries, the DAP Project Leaders are Mac Mackay and Clive Grant, who can be contacted on 020 7453 6552/6551, mac.mackay@caa.co.uk or clive.grant@caa.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

Mark Swan

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Director

Enclosure: 1. CDR (U)Y124

