



Department
for Transport



Juliet Kennedy
NATS (En Route) PLC
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12th May 2021

Dear Juliet

UK Airspace Modernisation: Masterplan Commission Update

1. As co-sponsor organisations of airspace modernisation in the UK, we are writing to NATS (En Route) PLC – NERL – to update the masterplan commission, which the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG) was established to implement, in accordance with NERL Air Traffic Services Licence Condition 10a.

Scope of the Masterplan Commission

2. The Department for Transport's FASI Programme Support Grant, which enables the remobilisation of airspace change proposals and their progression through Stage 2 of the Airspace Change Process (CAP1616), covers both the FASI-S and FASI-N programmes. As a result, the CAA and DfT, as co-sponsors of airspace modernisation, now commission and require NERL to extend the scope of the original masterplan commission, dated 2nd November 2018, to cover all of the UK. This is envisaged by the terms of NERL's Licence Condition 10a (2). The co-sponsors require ACOG to deliver the next iteration of the Masterplan, covering the revised scope, by the end of 2021.
3. Considering the revised scope of the commission, we understand, as a consequence of ACOG's work with current change sponsors, that Manchester, Liverpool, East Midlands, Leeds-Bradford, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and some of NERL's airspace change proposals have been identified as proposals that should be developed in coordination, under the Masterplan process. We note that is subject to being confirmed in Iteration 2. We also understand that the work ACOG will carry out to prepare Iteration 2, may also identify other change proposals that could be considered strategically important and therefore should be coordinated.

Objectives of the Commission

4. Delivering the Masterplan is one of the key components of the CAA's Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS). This strategy pulls together relevant government policies that airspace modernisation must deliver, and how they should be delivered, including setting out the need for relevant industry bodies to have clear deployment plans in place. The CAA will undertake a periodic review of its AMS during 2021, noting there have been several contextual changes since it was first published including:
 - Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Increasing prominence of environmental issues on the government's agenda.
 - An acceleration of new users in uncontrolled airspace.
5. The Government is in the process of revising transport policy across all modes to meet the challenge of the 2050 net-zero emissions target. The Government intends to publish a transport decarbonisation plan and an aviation strategy (including a net-zero aviation strategy). The Government is also developing a strategic framework for the longer-term recovery of the sector, which will focus on building back better and ensuring a successful UK aviation sector for the future. This will be published later this year.
6. At present, it would be premature to review whether the objectives of the commission should fully take account a revised transport policy, but we intend to do so as soon as practicable. We note however that ACOG agreed with the DfT and CAA to adopt an iterative approach to the development of the Masterplan, so that any developments in aviation policy, can be better managed from an airspace design perspective.
7. The CAA will soon publish the criteria by which we will assess and accept, or otherwise, future masterplan iterations, following the engagement exercise carried out last year (CAP 1887). This will set out the components to the process of assessing and accepting the Masterplan, including the objectives included in the original co-sponsor commission which, as explained above may develop in the future.
8. The CAA is required to meet its obligations under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 before accepting the Masterplan. ACOG's role in that, as part of the Masterplan process, will be reflected in the Masterplan acceptance criteria to be published shortly.
9. Recognising the need to build and maintain momentum on this essential programme, we expect NERL to work with airspace users – as the key beneficiaries of airspace modernisation – to put in place the necessary arrangements to continue this work in its future NR23 Business Plan.
10. The Airspace Modernisation Strategy requires a concerted industry effort to deliver airspace modernisation, and this letter extends the commissioning of work necessary to deliver two of the initiatives in the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, and further commissions may be prepared in the future.

Yours Sincerely,



Stuart Lindsey
Head of Airspace Modernisation



Ian Elston
DfT Deputy Director

Cc Mark Swan, Head of ACOG