

GENERAL AND BUSINESS AVIATION STRATEGIC FORUM

Tuesday 6 October 2020 10:30-12:30
Via Microsoft Teams conference call

In attendance:

Roger Hopkinson (RH)	General Aviation Alliance, GAA (Chair)
Marc Bailey (MB)	British Business & General Aviation Association, BBGA
Martin Robinson (MR)	Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association, AOPA
Phil Dunnington (PD)	General Aviation Champion
David Harding (DH)	Deputy Director of Aviation Safety Policy, DfT
Elena Barcan (EB)	Head of GA Policy, Strategy & Stakeholders, DfT
Adam Spalding (AS)	Head of GA Policy, DfT
Jon Round (JR)	Head, Airspace, Aerodromes and ATM, CAA
Rebecca Roberts-Hughes	Deputy-Director, Strategy & Policy, CAA
Jim Frampton (JF)	Acting Head, GA Unit, CAA
Glenn Bradley (GB)	Interim Head, Flight Operations, CAA
Laurence Baxter (LB)	GA Policy Officer, CAA (Secretary)

Apologies:

Richard Moriarty	Chief Executive, CAA
Rob Bishton	Director, Safety & Airspace Regulation Group, CAA

1. Introduction and apologies

The Chair noted the critical juncture at which the UK aviation sector sat, amid Covid restrictions and continuing uncertainty over UK's relationship with the EU post-transition, making the role of the GBASF as important as it has ever been. He also noted the apologies received.

2. Airspace Modernisation Strategy Governance / Airspace Change

[Paper 1: AMS Slide pack]

a) AMS Governance Structure (including ACOG)

RR-H provided an AMS update. The CAA has undertaken a consultative review of the AMS. The governance structure has been developed with input from Cabinet Office regarding its infrastructure programme delivery. The Forum discussed which initiatives of those outlined (Slide 4 of the accompanying presentation) were most relevant to general aviation, and there was debate over the concepts of 'airspace integration' and 'flexible use of airspace' and the extent that they should take into account the needs of general aviation.

b) ACOG Briefing

[Paper 2: ACOG Scenario Briefing]

MS provided a detailed briefing on the ACOG plan giving the post-COVID scenarios and the pandemic's impact on the current appetite for airspace change. Overall, the outcomes suggest a mix between a U-shaped recovery (where demand returns in phases so that pre-crisis traffic levels are reached in 2024/25) for short-haul and possibly an L-shaped recovery for longer-haul (where the demand returns more slowly and remains below pre-crisis levels for a prolonged period) due to changing business customer demand. Further considerations included:

- The phased return of some airports to the programme and uncertainty about how and when to re-mobilise it;
- The shortage of funding and resources to develop and deploy airspace changes;
- The increased importance of environmental performance as one of the key drivers for airspace modernization;
- The increased importance of airspace integration as a principal driver for airspace modernization;

- The application of the Government's aviation policy framework and the CAA's regulatory airspace change guidance;
- The need to maintain clear alignment between the development of the UK Airspace Change Programme and reforms to the European air transport network.

The Forum discussed how airspace modernisation would be proportionate to the capacity of both investors and users. There will also need to be a much better understanding of the flexible use of airspace and how can be is employed, including taking into account system-wide information management.

3. Minutes from the last meeting

[Paper 3: Minutes July meeting]

The minutes from the last meeting, held in July 2020, were adopted with no amendments. The CAA is authorised to publish them on the CAA website.

4. Review of actions and matters arising

[Paper 4: Actions Log 2020]

Action 109: *3-5 main GA priorities for the Airspace Modernisation Strategy*: Chair is still awaiting formal response to the paper circulated at the Forum on 10/9/19. JR would speak to some relevant issues during his Airspace update [Agenda item 4(e) below], but Chair would still like a formal response circulated to the Forum. **Closed and will continue to be taken forward as part of AMS with RRH.**

Action 116: *Paper to Secretary-of-State*: agreed to keep this action open and to pursue it when appropriate. **Action: DH to arrange meeting with RH**

Action 118: *Chair to set up Secretary-of-State/Aviation Minister GBASF briefing*: committed by Terms of Reference to report to Secretary-of-State by earlier this year, but Covid had delayed this and it was agreed that this should be picked back up early in the new year. **Action: DH to discuss how the new Aviation Minister is to be briefed on the Forum in context of GAA Annual Report.**

Action 123: *Creating a high level one-page activity plan (similar to the EASA roadmap) to show progress and generic terms*: DH prepared a short slide pack on the steps taken by DfT/CAA to achieve this. **Action: keep open and will coordinate with Forum before next meeting. Action DH**

Action 124: *Meeting to discuss flight training issues and the impact of the UK's exit from the EU*: **Action: being picked up in this meeting under Item 6.**

Action 125. *Network of airfields*: list under Item 6. Would need investment of £100-150K for consultancy. DH has been working with various parties with view to developing a more substantial long-term strategy. **Action: update at next meeting.**

Action 126: *Temporary Danger Areas "Paper of Concern"*: paper circulated. **Item closed.**

Action 127: *Discuss the potential to allow flight training schools to do FAA licences in the UK*: covered in this meeting under Item 7. **Item closed.**

5. Airspace

[Paper 5: Airspace Update]

a) GNSS Update:

- A shortened, more proportionate version of the CAP1616 follow-up document capturing non-airspace issues (lighting etc) would be provided in the next few months
- Kemble: work on its GNSS approach is in progress, and expected to be complete within the next few weeks.
- EGNOS: Reps are engaging with DfT to represent the concerns of the sector should this capability not be supported post Brexit. DfT are aware of the associated concerns and have briefed the Secretary-of-State.

b) Electronic Conspicuity:

- CAP1391 Electronic Conspicuity (EC) devices is being updated to accommodate major changes and improvements to handheld devices.

- Engagement with DfT: The EC Rebate scheme was launched on 5 October. Applications are already being received, and feedback from social media has been positive. The GA community are also actively involved as a way to encourage device take-up.
- Temporary Danger Areas: uAvionix are trialling placing masts at 4-5 sites in the Sites in the South-East, including Lasham and Goodwood. Their ambition is to demonstrate a multi-faceted approach enabling BVLOS not just in TDAs but also in Transponder Mandatory Zones (TMZs) with potential ADS-B coverage for drone operators.

c) SARG General Airspace Engagement Group:

- Will meet bi-monthly; draft terms of reference have been prepared.
- It will involve small groups of 3-4 from each of the GA community and the CAA, aiming to engender a candid, free-flowing exchange of knowledge and views on airspace issues of concern.
- Live ACPs will remain out-of-scope
- It will report jointly to the Head of AAA and GBASF Chair.

6. DfT Update

a) Minister:

- The new Minister of Aviation, Maritime and Security has been confirmed as Robert Courts MP.
- The Secretary of State is keen to continue the GA Programme monthly meetings.
- A COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Plan is being developed, and will include a range of scenarios. Discussions are ongoing with HM Treasury on specific options for the aviation sector.
- The Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 should provide a medium-term spending settlement plan which may affect some strategic programmes. DfT are still awaiting a steer from HMT on elements of their future funding, including the GA Programme. Confirmation is expected by mid-November.

b) DfT GA Programme Plan:

- Airfields Development Fund: we hope that this may be able to include work with suppliers. Communications regarding the launch of the Fund. Applications for bids have now gone live. The CAA are also now recruiting for the Airfields' Advisory Team. Further research is required on some specific at-risk aerodromes, and the Forum endorsed the need for this.
- Airspace: The EC Rebate scheme was again mentioned, as was the GNSS approaches Phase 1 work.
- EGNOS: A lengthy discussion took place over whether the UK would be able to continue to access EGNOS, and the implications if it could not. The Forum's preference is for the UK to maintain access under an agreement with the EU but recognised the need for mitigations to be put in place if this is not possible. Forum members suggested that DfT should consider quantifying the implications of losing EGNOS access in order to support its discussions with BEIS who have the lead on EGNOS. GB explained that, in theory, losing assured access to EGNOS would impact the Localiser Performance and Vertical Guidance (LPV) element of approaches. However, he explained that many approaches could still be performed under Performance-Based Navigation but that, given the associated LPV issue and its effect on vertical navigation accuracy, this would typically require a 150ft increase in Decision Heights. It was therefore agreed that an impact analysis would be required, including understanding the potential impact (if any) on smaller aerodrome. This will be one of several aviation topics that it was felt should be included in UK-EU negotiations. At this stage, it is not clear whether the issue will be resolved before the end of the current Transition Period.

Action: DH to consider undertaking an analysis of the effect of the loss of EGNOS on UK commercial and general aviation should assured access to EGNOS not be achieved be achieved in EU exit negotiations.

c) COVID-19 Recovery:

- DfT is considering how general aviation might be included in the overall UK Aviation Recovery Plan.

d) EU Exit:

- Political negotiations are continuing, but until these reach an agreed position, very little opportunity exists for technical discussion on a future aviation agreement or other working arrangements. In the meantime, DfT and the CAA are engaging in evidence gathering in preparation for the formal start of technical discussions.

7. Pilot Training Post-COVID

Further to 6.c), EB gave an update on the government's support for aviation personnel affected by COVID-19.

- DfT are working with the Department for Education on capped support packages for aircrew who are about to become qualified, newly qualified or experienced and who are facing debt as a result of redundancy or curtailed employment prospects. This includes talks with private providers who would be able to take on at least part of those debts, and this is being included in discussions with HMT on short term options to assist personnel from the aviation sector.
- Skills retention: DfT are liaising with firms and trade unions to try to find opportunities to maintain the skills currency and proficiency of staff in the sector. It was noted that the trade unions in particular had been invaluable through their willingness to share data.
- VAT on pilot training: the Forum discussed the potential benefits of reducing VAT on aviation fuel and/or pilot training, and EB described discussions with L3 Aviation in support of their engagement with HMT. However, at present there is a lack of evidence to prove that reducing VAT would have as significant corollary benefit to students by reducing the high cost of flight training, so it may be difficult to justify such an approach without a concrete commitment by training organisations to pass on such savings. The Forum discussed a range of associated issues, including the perception that VAT acts as an obstacle to making UK flying schools globally competitive, whereas other countries appeared to use tax waivers to do improve the viability of their respective flying training sectors. The point was also made that discussions on the potential benefits of VAT reduction/removal should not focus solely on aircrew training, but should also consider opportunities from applying it to any professional training in UK the aviation sector.

8. Aviation Services

There was no further update beyond the issues outlined above.

9. General Aviation Unit Update

JF gave an update on recent GAU activity.

- EU exit communications: in addition to the information provided by the CAA's EU Exit microsite, the GAU will host a webinar to brief the UK GA community on airworthiness, flight crew licensing and other issues associated with the UK's departure from EASA.
- The current Covid-related Part FCL and medical exemptions were outlined, and JF highlighted that those which were due to expire in Nov and Dec 20 would not be renewed. Members were asked to note and pass-on the need for GA pilots not to wait until the last minute to renew licences, medical examinations or to revalidate by experience, particularly given the enduring uncertainty over weather and future Covid restrictions.
- PPL on-line exams: following a successful 3-month 'pathfinder' trial phase, the full PPL eExams online TK testing system went live on 5 Oct. The CAA is now also working on a version of the on-line exam system for Part-66L sailplane and balloon engineer licensing, as well as for Balloon Flight Crew Licensing.
- Pilot medical declarations: GAU have agreed with DfT that there is scope for more a more permanent approach, and the intention is that this will be achieved through the laying of an SI which should come into effect by the end of Jan 21.
- Post-EU Exit GA Challenge: the CAA will shortly be initiating a consultation process on the opportunities and challenges presented by the UK's departure from EASA. This would seek the views of the whole GA community on which regulatory issues (where safety would not be adversely affected) should be prioritised by the GAU in the coming year. The following areas are those under consideration: airworthiness/maintenance, flight crew licensing, aerodromes, historic aircraft, rules of the air, and flight crew medical.

- MB noted that discussion on post-EU exit opportunities/challenges should extend to business aviation which provides most of the GA sector's £3bn contribution to the UK economy. Alternatively, he felt the GAU should be re-titled as the "Sport & Recreational Aviation Unit"

Action: JF & DH to engage with RH/MB/MR to understand business aviation interests, and how these could be captured and addressed.

10. Update from the GA Advocate

PD gave a short update on the importance of maintaining awareness of general aviation in the current situation, and focusing in particular on the following areas:

- Sensible interpretation of government health advice on COVID-19
- Airspace/Electronic Conspicuity/GNSS approaches: developing a structure in which GA, including business aviation, is appropriately represented in airspace discussions, and increasing GA representation in all airspace issues.
- The Forum also discussed the possibility of establishing a DfT-funded charitable body that would be self-sustaining in longer-term and which could coherently represent different parts of GA in airspace forums and discussions.

11. Any Other Business

MR raised a concern about on-line PPL exams regarding a disclaimer statement that effectively pushes any problems back on the examiner. JF is aware of this and is looking to revise the disclaimer.

RH noted that this was the last meeting with LB as GBASF Secretary. He thanked him for his work on that: noting the excellent quality of the meeting record and particularly the largely unseen build-up of agenda and follow through actions.

Provisional dates for 2021 Meetings:

- Tuesday, 2 February 2021: 10.30-12.30, CAA Westferry House, London [TBC – Covid permitting]
- Tuesday 11th May 2021: 1030-1230, CAA Westferry House, London [TBC – Covid permitting]
- Tuesday 20th July 2021: 1030-1230, CAA Westferry House, London [TBC – Covid permitting]
- Tuesday 12th October 2021: 1030-1230, CAA Westferry House, London [TBC – Covid permitting]