Onboarding Process for the UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) Provider [for the London TMA Region]

CAP 3129

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Introduction

Scope

In October 2024, the DfT and CAA consulted on the overall concept of a United Kingdom Airspace Design Service (UKADS) to improve delivery confidence in airspace modernisation.[1] The consultation was followed with a consultation response document [CAP 3106 - Airspace modernisation: outcome of the consultation on a UK Airspace Design Service](#).

The Secretary of State [decided](#) to create a new United Kingdon Airspace Design Service (UKADS). Subject to the licence modification process set out in the Transport Act 2000, this will be tasked to NATS (En Route) plc (NERL or UKADS provider) through a change to its air traffic services licence. This Onboarding process document concerns the 11 airport airspace change proposals and NERL's airspace change proposals that together make up the London cluster of airspace change proposals[2] which, subject to the licence modification process, NERL will be tasked with progressing as a single airspace change proposal. In this document we refer to this airspace change proposal as the London TMA Region Single ACP, sponsored by NERL as the UKADS provider. The current sponsors of the existing airspace change proposals will be partners required to work closely and collaboratively with the UKADS provider.

This CAA onboarding process is therefore focused on the process to onboard the London cluster airspace change proposals into a London TMA Region Single ACP sponsored by NERL. If UKADS provider's mandate is extended to cover other geographic regions, the CAA will consider whether it would be useful to publish other onboarding processes relevant to those areas.

The London cluster ACPs will all need to complete Stage 2 of the CAP 1616 airspace change process before they can be onboarded by the UKADS provider. Onboarding follows a 4-step process, with the CAA checking that the process has been completed prior to the withdrawal of the existing London cluster ACPs from the CAA's [Airspace](#)

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[1]   On 17 March 2025, the Government confirmed that:
– it will establish a UKADS and Support Fund, and that it was working with NATS with the shared ambition for the UKADS to be up and running this year.
– by September 2025, the CAA and DfT will consult on a package of changes to the process for making airspace design decisions more proportionate, while retaining the important principles of a transparent, evidence-based process that will involve all stakeholders.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-new-approach-to-ensure-regulators-and-regulation-support-growth

[2]   London 'cluster' – The London cluster of the airspace change masterplan currently involves NERL and 11 airports in the south east of England: Biggin Hill, Bournemouth, Farnborough, Gatwick, Heathrow, London City, Luton, RAF Northolt, Southampton, Southend, Stansted

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change portal and creation of the London TMA Region Single ACP. The UKADS provider's work on the London TMA Region Single ACP will start with the onboarding process, once the London cluster ACPs have completed Stage 2 of the CAP 1616 airspace change process.

This CAA onboarding process is published pursuant to Direction 4 of the Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2023.

The onboarding process is a new process, separate from, and additional to the CAP 1616 airspace change processes.

Further details about the UKADS can be found at caa.co.uk/UKADS.

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CAP 3129   Revision history and effective pages

Revision history and effective pages

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CAP 3129   Chapter 1: Onboarding Process

Chapter 1
Onboarding Process

Overview

This onboarding process sets out how existing airspace change proposals (ACPs) within the London cluster will be transferred to enable the UKADS provider to sponsor a London TMA Region Single ACP.

The London cluster ACPs will need to complete Stage 2 of the CAP 1616 airspace change process before they can be onboarded into the London TMA Region Single ACP.

After onboarding, upon commencing the CAP 1616 processes for the London TMA Region Single ACP the UKADS provider will review the Initial Options provided by each partner[3]. However, that review is not part of this onboarding process[4].

Onboarding follows a 4-step process, with the CAA checking that the process has been completed prior to the withdrawal of the existing London cluster ACPs from the airspace change portal and creation of the London TMA Region Single ACP.

Step 1 – Data Collection

The UKADS provider will work with each partner to arrange how steps 1 to 4 will be carried out, determining the timelines and putting in place (where appropriate, agreed) mechanisms to ensure cyber security and the protection of commercially and competitively sensitive information in accordance with UK law.

The role of the UKADS in conjunction with the partner for the purpose of this onboarding process, is to ensure that all the relevant ACPs are collated into a single ACP for the London TMA region.

The partner must submit all relevant work (whenever generated) relating to their existing ACP in the London Cluster to the UKADS. This must include all work undertaken by the partner, including technical information, forecasts and supporting raw data (whether or not already published on the Airspace change portal).

From the date the UKADS provider commences onboarding with the partner, the partner must not complete further work on the existing ACP unless and until, the UKADS provider has agreed to this. This includes any stakeholder engagements that relates to the further development of the existing ACP, onboarding, the single design and the onboarding

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[3]   As explained above, the current sponsors of the existing London cluster airspace change proposals will be partners required to work closely and collaboratively with the UKADS provider.

[4]   That process will be set out in a CAP 1616 document

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partner arrangements (see below). For the avoidance of doubt this does not impact stakeholder engagement that relates to the ordinary course of operating an airport or an ANSP which should continue as usual.

The UKADS provider may make requests to the partner to seek clarification or further information that it may require. This could include information on other ACPs that the partner is sponsoring and, if so, the UKADS provider must make clear why it considers such information will be relevant and required. The partner must provide this information when requested. The UKADS provider must inform the partner when this step is completed.

Step 2 - Design considerations and "commitments"

The partner must provide the UKADS provider with all design considerations it has been working with to date for the existing ACP in the London cluster. These will fall within one of the following elements:

Operational design considerations

- Operational Design considerations are operational considerations and may include:

    o technical opportunities and constraints;

    o capacity considerations including peak schedule and forecast growth.

Local design considerations

- Local Design considerations refer to considerations that result from the characteristics of the geographical area identified in the existing ACP. For instance, listing noise sensitive buildings, population centres and noise sensitive areas.

 "Commitments"

The partner must also provide the UKADS provider with any "commitments" it has provided to any stakeholders.

- "Commitments" refer to any statements the partner has made as part of their airspace change proposal process to stakeholders, such as in local groups or forums, that the partner would undertake certain tasks or make certain choices.

Step 3 - Review of design considerations & "commitments"

Once the UKADS provider has confirmed the partner has completed Step 2, the UKADS provider can begin step 3a below. Once all partners have been onboarded the UKDADS provider can move to step 3b. This is to ensure the UKADS provider has all relevant information relating to any remaining considerations and "commitment" to consider interactions across all ACPs being taken into the London TMA Region Single ACP

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Under step 3 of this onboarding process the UKADS provider must review all of the design considerations and "commitments" submitted to it in step 2, in the following order:

a. The UKADS must discount any design considerations and "commitments" if they impact the UKADS ability to meet the mandate[5], strategic objectives or the Government policy on what the London TMA Region Single ACP must achieve.

b. The remaining design considerations and "commitments" that are not discounted in the previous step, must be reviewed by the UKADS provider and discounted or taken forward.

The UKADS provider must provide the CAA with a brief rationale for discounting or taking forward any design consideration and "commitment" from both step 3a and step 3b.

The design considerations and "commitments" that are to be taken forward in the London TMA Region Single ACP will be set out in the relevant partnership arrangement (see Step 4) and will be referred to as Partner Specific Design Factors (PSDF).

Step 4 – Onboarding Partnership Arrangement

To complete this onboarding process, the UKADS provider will enter into an onboarding partnership arrangement with each of the partners.

The onboarding partnership arrangement will set out a clear division of responsibilities between the UKADS provider and the relevant partner.

While the form and terms of each onboarding partnership arrangement are for the parties to agree, as a minimum, each onboarding partnership arrangement must cover the following areas:

- The roles and responsibilities of the UKADS provider.

- The roles and responsibilities of the partner.

- List of Partner Specific Design Factors (PSDF).

The onboarding partnership arrangement may require:

- issues in relation to or arising out of the onboarding partnership arrangement to be resolved through the governance framework for the UKADS provider;

- amendment/variation provisions as arrangements evolve as the London TMA Region Single ACP progresses through the CAP 1616 airspace change process.

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[5]　A single design that prioritises maintaining a high standard of safety and is consistent with the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, secures system-wide benefits and overall network optimisation that results in the most efficient and resilient airspace network possible, while giving due consideration to local circumstances and environmental impacts (CAP 3106 Summary of the Consultation outcome: paragraph 9)

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CAP 3129   Chapter 2: CAA Oversight

Chapter 2
CAA Oversight

CAA Onboarding Check

Once the UKADS provider has completed the 4 steps in relation to all the existing London cluster airspace change proposals (ACPs), it will be required to demonstrate to the CAA that this onboarding process has been followed. The UKADS provider will do this by submitting its onboarding documentation to the CAA.

The onboarding documentation will contain:

- A summary of how steps 1 to 4 have been completed for each partner, including the rationale developed in step 3.

- An annex with detailed explanation of step 3 for each partner.

- An annex with copies of the partnership arrangements for each partner.

- Clear identification of commercially and competitively sensitive information belonging to the UKADS provider and each of the partners (see below regarding publication).

The onboarding documentation may be submitted to the CAA for each partner separately; however, the CAA will not complete its check until all documents for all partners have been received.

The CAA may request supplementary information or clarification of the onboarding documentation from the UKADS provider or any of the partners to ensure that the process has been followed.

The CAA will look for assurance that the following activities will be completed by either the UKADS provider or the partner:

- completion of safety assessments

- engagement and consultation responsibilities

- training

- safeguarding

- instrument flight procedures (IFP)

- roles during the implementation of the change.

When the CAA is satisfied that the onboarding process has been completed, the following actions will occur:

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- the CAA will create a new London TMA Region Single ACP on the [Airspace change portal](#) at the beginning of the Consult stage of the CAP 1616 process (currently Stage 3);

- the CAA will publish the Partner Specific Design Factors (PSDF) (in line with the key principle of transparency set out in CAP 1616[6]) and a statement that it has accepted the onboarding documentation submitted by the UKADS provider on the London TMA Region Single ACP Airspace change portal page;

- the CAA will withdraw the existing ACPs that have been onboarded and make a statement on each ACP Airspace change portal page directing people to the new London TMA Region Single ACP page on the portal.

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[6]   See paragraphs 1.30 to 1.32 in Chapter 1 of: [CAP 1616 Edition 5 - Airspace Change Process](#)

APPENDIX A

Terminology

Terminology	
Airspace change partner (Partner)	an organisation usually an airport or air navigation service provider (ANSP) that is required to collaborate with the UKADS provider, where the UKADS provider will be the sponsor of the London TMA Region Single ACP. For this document, the term "partner" refers to a sponsor of an existing ACP in the London cluster, the sponsorship of which will transfer to the UKADS provider once onboarding is completed.
"Commitments"	any statements the partner has made as part of their airspace change proposal process to stakeholders, such as in local groups or forums, that the partner would undertake certain tasks or make certain choices
Local Design Considerations	Local Design considerations refer to considerations that result from the characteristics of the geographical area identified in the existing ACP. For instance, listing noise sensitive buildings, population centres and noise sensitive areas.
London cluster	the existing ACPs forming the London cluster being sponsored by NERL and 11 airports in the south east of England: Biggin Hill, Bournemouth, Farnborough, Gatwick, Heathrow, London City, Luton, RAF Northolt, Southampton, Southend, Stansted.
London TMA region	the London Terminal Control Area (generally abbreviated to London TMA), plus adjoining airspace serving neighbouring airports (for example, Bournemouth and Southampton) that is outside the London TMA but has interdependencies with the London TMA which will be formally described in the UKADS provider's strategic objectives.
Onboarding	by which existing ACPs within the London cluster that have completed Stage 2, will be transferred to a consolidated single ACP sponsored by the UKADS provider.

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Terminology

Operational Design Considerations	given by the partner to the UKADS provider. This may set out the technical opportunities, constraints and capacity considerations including peak schedule and forecast growth.
Partner Specific Design Factors (PSDF)	is the list of design considerations and "commitments" provided by the partner to the UKADS provider which the UKADS provider is taking forward into, the London LTMA Region Single ACP as partner specific design factors.
Onboarding Partnership arrangement	means an arrangement between the UKADS provider and the airspace change partner, the form and terms of which are to be decided by the parties.