

DfT Airspace and Noise Engagement Group 13/10/17

UK Airspace Policy consultation

An update was given, with a commitment that the results would be published in late October or early November. *(The results were subsequently published on 24th October, so this note does not go through them in detail).* At the meeting, the DfT ran through all the questions, with particular emphasis on the further consultation work around “Tier 2” changes that would be undertaken, and the setting up of ICCAN.

Use of webTAG to assess the impact of aviation noise

DfT gave a short, high level guide. Several respondees to the UK Airspace Policy consultation had said that they did not know how webTAG worked, or how it could be used. WebTAG can be used to assess the impact of changes in noise exposure by assigning a monetary value for each 1dB change against a range of health impacts. However, it is not comprehensive, is limited to assessing amenity (annoyance), acute myocardial infarction, dementia, stroke and sleep disturbance, and uses average noise metrics.

Attendees queried whether webTAG could assess respite. Imperial College is to carry out noise mapping research on reasons for hospital admissions around Heathrow over 5 years. DfT was open to funding an independent review of what webTAG could or could not do for local community groups.

New Airspace Change Process and transitional arrangements

CAA’s final guidance expected at the end of November, with introduction in the New Year. Transitional arrangements will be as previously published. Subject to Board approval, 9 new posts will be created to manage the process. There will be simplified communications material for non-technical audiences. The guidance will say that airspace change sponsors can go beyond the minimum level of consultation, although the CAA won’t actively encourage it (resources). Responses to consultations will be expected to be uploaded to the Portal in tranches, not waiting for the end. More detail will be given to sponsors on how to treat and categorise responses. A record of formal engagement and outcomes will be required. Use of additional metrics will be encouraged and base-case and “do nothing” assessments will be required.

Appendix B of the guidance (Environmental metrics and assessment requirements) was praised as a useful checklist that could well have a life of its own beyond the airspace change process.

There will be a delay in the introduction of the dedicated airspace change portal for six months or so. In the interim, the CAA’s website will be used.

New UK Aviation Strategy

Concerns amongst community groups were that the Strategy was big on numbers, but small on the downsides. There was also concern about the emphasis on consumers. DfT admitted that its Phase 2 consultation timetable was too ambitious about starting in the second half of 2017. A DfT suggestion that all topic papers should be consulted on in one go was not favoured by anyone. Moving forward, DfT consider that round-table discussions would help.

Noise regulation

A regulatory proposal was introduced by the Aviation Environment Federation, Aviation Communities Forum, Stop Stansted Expansion and Heathrow Association for the Control of Air Noise.

The backdrop was the belief amongst local communities that the link in the APF between aviation growth and noise reduction wasn't working. A new approach is required, as the Government is anticipating a 50% increase in ATMs by 2030.

The proposal would involve the appointment of an independent Regulator, who would determine the degree to which airports would be required to ensure noise impacts were reduced over successive review periods, which would be about 5 years. The requirements would be expressed as Noise Reduction Factors (NRF), following consultation with interested parties. NRFs would differ from day to night, and would be time-profiled during the review period. The Regulator would have a number of duties and objectives set by the SoS for Transport and for Health and the Environment. Account would need to be taken of airports that have not met their responsibilities under the APF since 2013 so that they did not benefit from any lack of earlier action. However, if there was a good relationship between an airport and local communities, regulatory action would not be needed as it might be seen as disproportionate.

Due to timing, ANEG didn't debate the proposal in detail, but it was suggested that a workshop should be convened to take it forward.

PBN research

A recommendation for research into the effects of concentration on communities living under PBN flight paths was introduced by the Aviation Environment Federation, Aviation Communities Forum, Stop Stansted Expansion and Heathrow Association for the Control of Air Noise. The reason for the recommendation was that there is a gap in the evidence to assist the implementation of PBN as part of the airspace modernisation programme for future airspace change proposals.

DfT said that ANEG didn't have a research budget, but this could be a recommendation to the Minister. Scoping work was needed, and terms of reference established. Could be something for ICCAN?

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25/10/17