

Airspace Classification update

Summary

We have identified 55 distinct airspace volumes from the consultation responses received in March last year. All airspace volumes, and their supporting commentary, are in the process of being considered to determine which can be taken forward for further review, and what form this will take. The review will identify those areas which have the potential of moving them to the Amend phase.

- Of the volumes proposed, the majority mentioned airspace volumes that sit within an existing Airspace Change Proposal (ACP). Where the ACP is in Stages 1-4 of the CAP1616 process, the comments will be passed to the relevant Change Sponsors for their consideration as set out below.
- Where the comments refer to airspace volumes that sit within an ACP in the latter stages of the CAP 1616 process, we will examine whether the airspace volume proposed is “sufficiently distinct” so as to qualify for review under this process.
- A number of the volumes proposed lie within restricted airspace used by the Military and changes to this airspace has the potential to have a detrimental impact on Military operations. These comments have been shared with the MoD as the designated Controlling Authority.

A final plan of airspace volumes to be taken through to the Amend phase will be released in March 2021.

Airspace volumes now under active review by the CAA

Where the proposed volumes of airspace do not meet one of the filtering criteria, we are working with the Airspace Controlling Authorities (ACAs) to gather robust evidence and to demonstrate the case that a review of the classification of these volumes has the potential to provide a more equitable use of that airspace.

While we asked consultation respondents to include evidence to support their proposed volumes of airspace for review, very little empirical evidence was supplied. As such, we are now in conversation with the ACAs to collate and analyse hard data to support the case for change. This includes a review of existing airspace usage by user type and any known safety or operational

issues. This information will enable us to determine a compelling case for the airspace classification to be reviewed.

Where the evidence shows that there are resolvable issues, these volumes will be taken through to the Amend phase of the process.

Airspace volumes already under an ACP

We recognise that airports and aerodromes in the UK are currently undertaking a significant programme of airspace modernisation and are already reviewing their use of controlled airspace as part of this work.

While many of these airspace change proposals are currently paused, we do not wish to undermine this important activity. Nor do we wish to undertake any formal reviews of airspace classification which then may not align with the broader programme of airspace modernisation in the UK. This has the potential to lead to confusion amongst airspace users, potentially accentuating infringement risks and wasting resource.

Therefore, for those airspace volumes which form part of an existing ACP in Stages 1-4 of the CAP1616 process, we will pass the consultation comments that we have received through our consultation process to the corresponding Change Sponsor. We will request that those sponsors consider and respond to this feedback in the same way they consider and responds= to all engagement feedback on their airspace design activity, at the appropriate stage of the CAP1616 process.

We will also work with change sponsors to determine whether there are any volumes of airspace within their existing ACP programme, identified through the consultation feedback, which may be better suited to review under this procedure.

Airspace in, or having recently completed, stages 5 – 7 of the CAP 1616 process

Where an airspace volume is within an ACP in its final stages of the CAP 1616 process or has completed an ACP in the last three years, we will examine the comments to determine whether they relate to airspace volumes which are “sufficiently distinct” from the ACP. If this is the case, we will examine those volumes, and the associated evidence, in more detail so as to determine whether they qualify for further review under this procedure.

Next steps

We will publish the set of airspace volumes which we propose to take forward to the Amend Phase of this procedure in March 2021.

Going forward, we will base our consideration of airspace volumes for review on the examination of available data. We are therefore investing in a new data platform to collate and analyse available data sources to ensure an accurate understanding of how airspace is being used, both

current and historically. In addition, we strongly encourage all airspace users to continue to report any instances of airspace access or refusal of air traffic services using Form 1522.

Table of responses

Airspace proposed	Count of responses
Aberdeen	20
Belfast	1
Belfast Aldergrove	35
Belfast City	1
Benson	2
Biggin Hill	1
Birmingham	11
Birmingham and East Midlands	2
Boscombe Down	2
Boscombe Down and Middle Wallop	1
Bristol	25
Bristol area	2
Bristol / Cardiff	2
Brize Norton	46
Cardiff	4
Cotswold CTA 3, 4, 13, 14	1
Cotswold CTA 5&6	1
Danger Areas	34
Daventry CTA	51
Doncaster Sheffield	98
Durham Tees Valley	10
East Midlands	3
Edinburgh	7
Fairford	2
Farnborough	36
Gatwick	11
Glasgow	18
Heathrow	15
Huddersfield Gap	1

Airspace proposed	Count of responses
Inverness	6
Kemble	1
Leeds Bradford	17
Liverpool	2
London FIR	3
LTMA	307
Luton	8
Manchester	38
Manchester / Leeds Bradford	1
Newcastle	1
NITON CTA	3
North Weald	1
Norwich	69
Oxford	1
Portsmouth	1
Prestwick	1
Scottish FIR – N560	11
Scottish FIR	17
Scottish TMA	14
Solent	12
South Cerney	23
Southampton	5
Southend	11
Stansted	5
UK FIR	3
Wittering	2
Other	81
Misc	38