Ministry of Defence

Danger Area Airspace Manager
Royal Air Force
Email: [redacted]

Sir/Ma'am, 30 Aug 18

MOD DIO HOLBEACH AIR WEAPONS RANGE AIRSPACE REQUIREMENT - AIRSPACE CHANGE PROPOSAL - STAGE 2 DEVELOP & ASSESS

1. The *Design Principles* and supporting evidence was approved at the CAA's *Define Gateway* and can be found at this **LINK.** Please note the priority order and additional design principle at the link - based on the feedback I received from you.

2. The next stage is to develop options for the airspace change and this letter forms part of the Airspace Change Proposal process as defined in CAP 1616. The list of options should address the *Statement of Need* and align with the *Design Principles*. For ease of reading, the Statement of Need (SON) and Design Principles are stated below before the various options are outlined and considered to meet the SON.

3. **Statement of Need.** The UK Academic Air Weapons Ranges (AAWRs) have needed to evolve since the infancy of military flying and the requirement to practice weaponry tactics. DIO Holbeach (EG D207)) has barely altered since the cold-war; when training focused on high speed, low-level hit-and-run style attack profiles using dumb bombs. Modern air weaponry profiles using smart weapons and associated tactics are conducted in a significantly different fashion and often assume air-superiority; enabling modern Air Systems to loiter on station overhead the range for an extended period whilst working ground-based Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) for talk-ons to varied targets in Close Air Support (CAS) scenarios. To cater for these modern flight profiles, training and new weapons, the airspace needs to be enhanced. The principals of FUA will be considered throughout the ACP to ensure that, wherever possible, the minimum volume of airspace required to achieve the military mission is requested.

4. **Design Principles**:

   a. The design will provide a suitable safe training area.

   b. Management of airspace to utilise FUA principles (Efficiency + Airspace Sharing).

   c. Consider Environmental & Ecological impact.

   d. Safety – ensure airspace design safely caters for all profile types.

   e. Minimise impact upon the network where possible (Efficiency + Airspace Sharing).

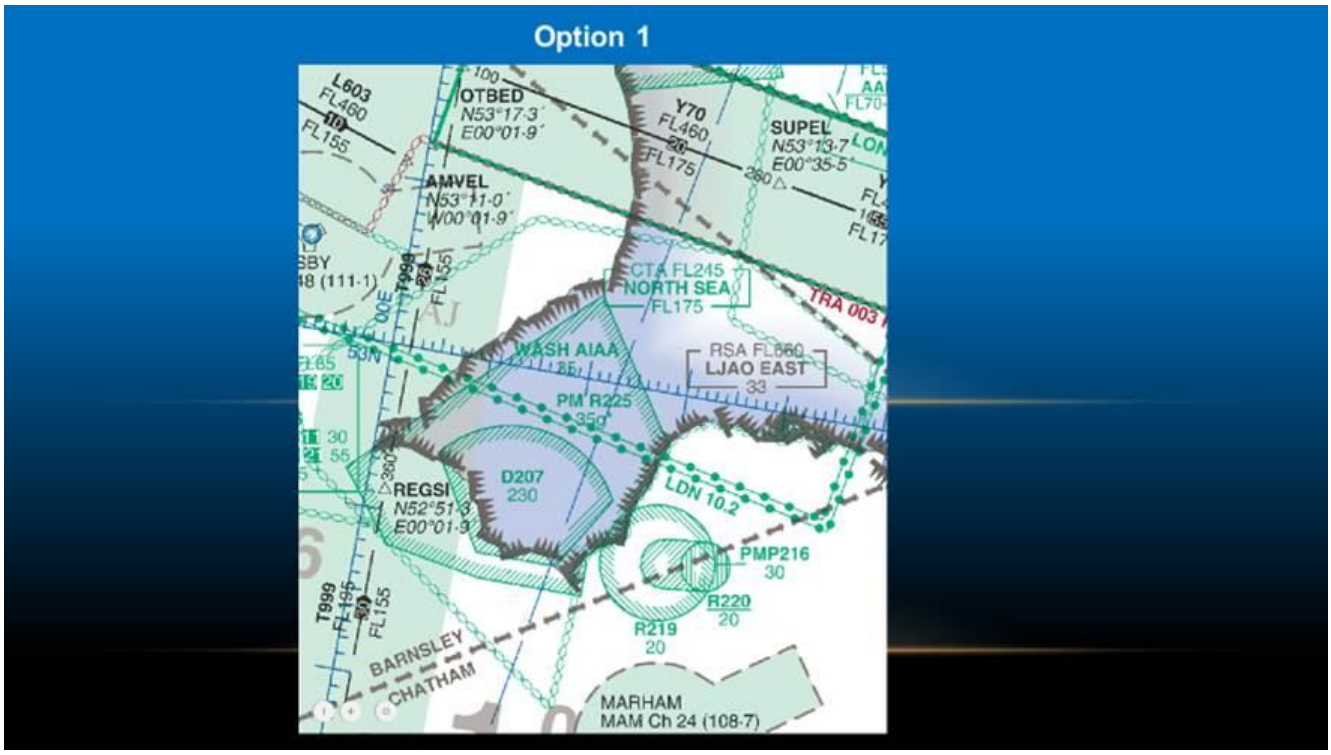
   f. The training area will be within reach of UK/USAFE Main Operating Bases.

   g. Minimise impact upon any other airspace users.

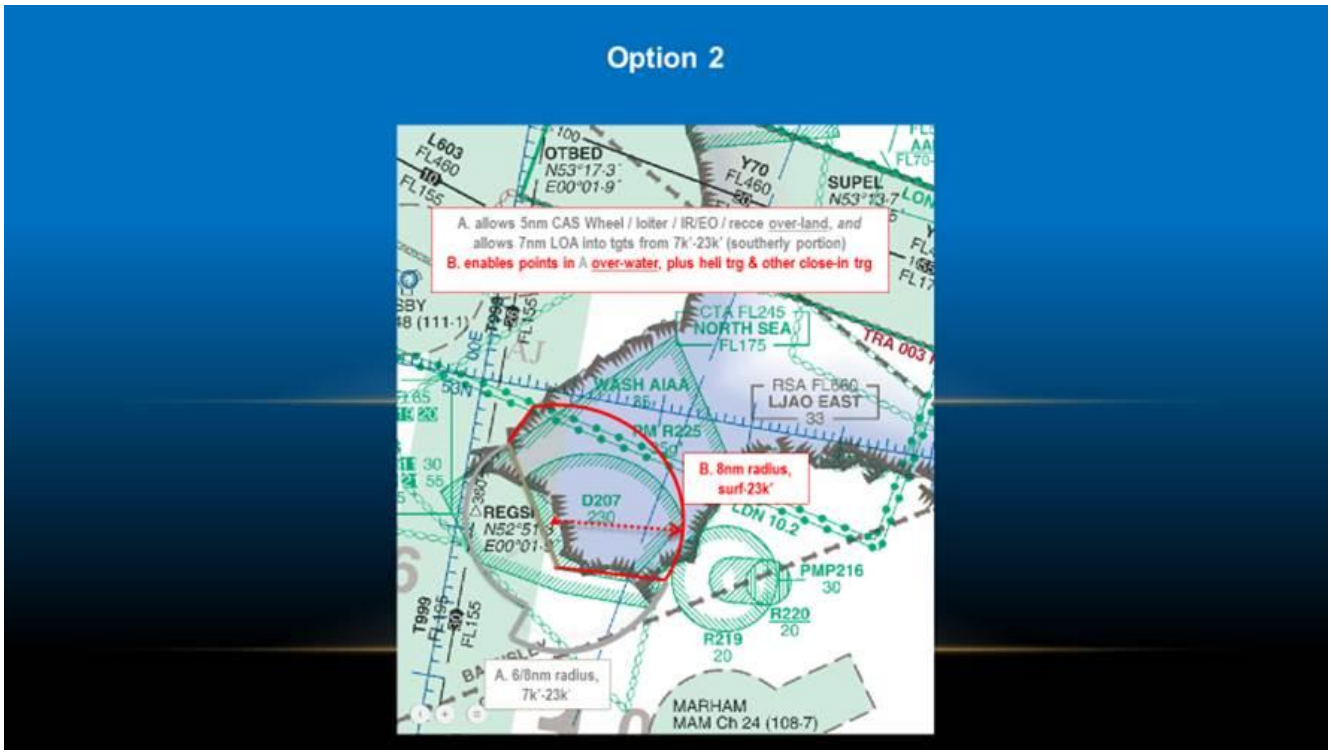
   h. Simplicity - utilise existing structures where possible (Efficiency, Simplicity + Safety).

5. **Options**. Based on the SON and Design Principles, the following 7 options have been considered:

a. No Change. *This does not comply with the SON and is therefore not feasible.*

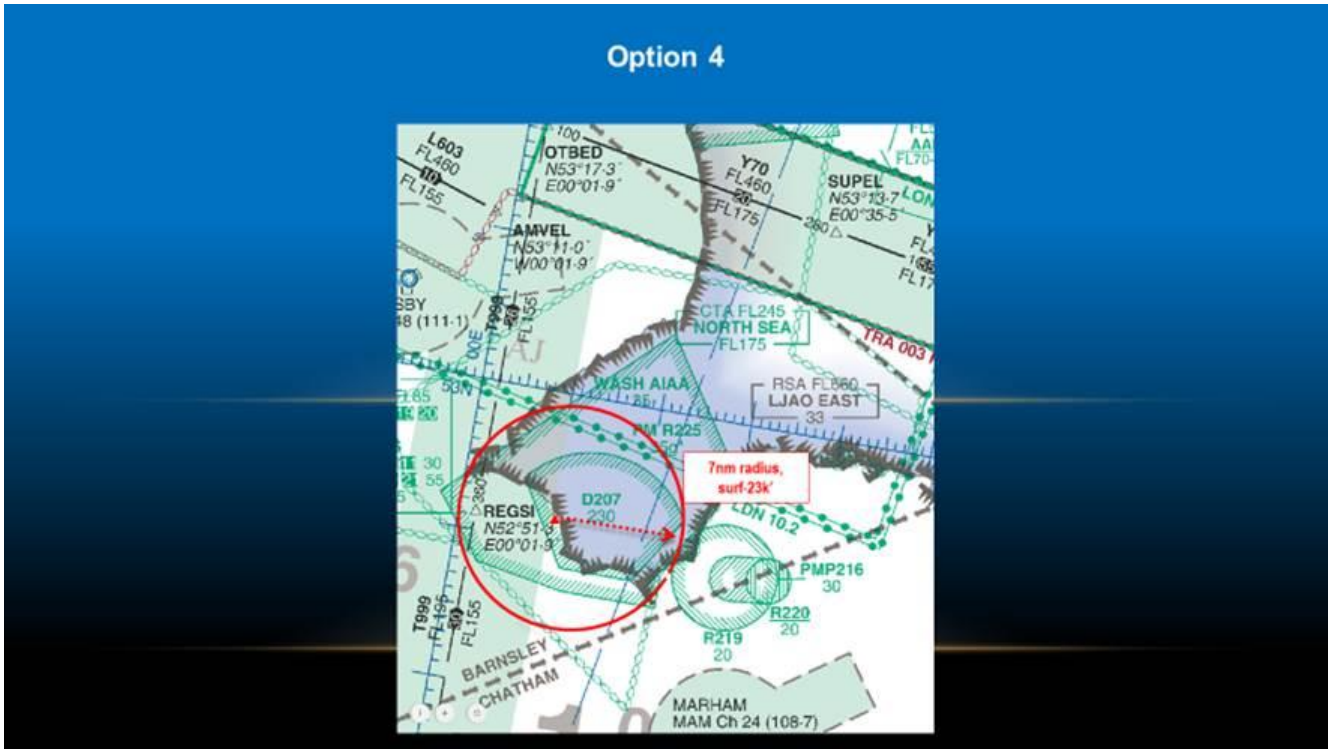


b. Enhanced Holbeach Airspace to cater for modern & future weapons and adheres to FUA. *Perhaps a little messy and may lead to pilot/planning confusion.*

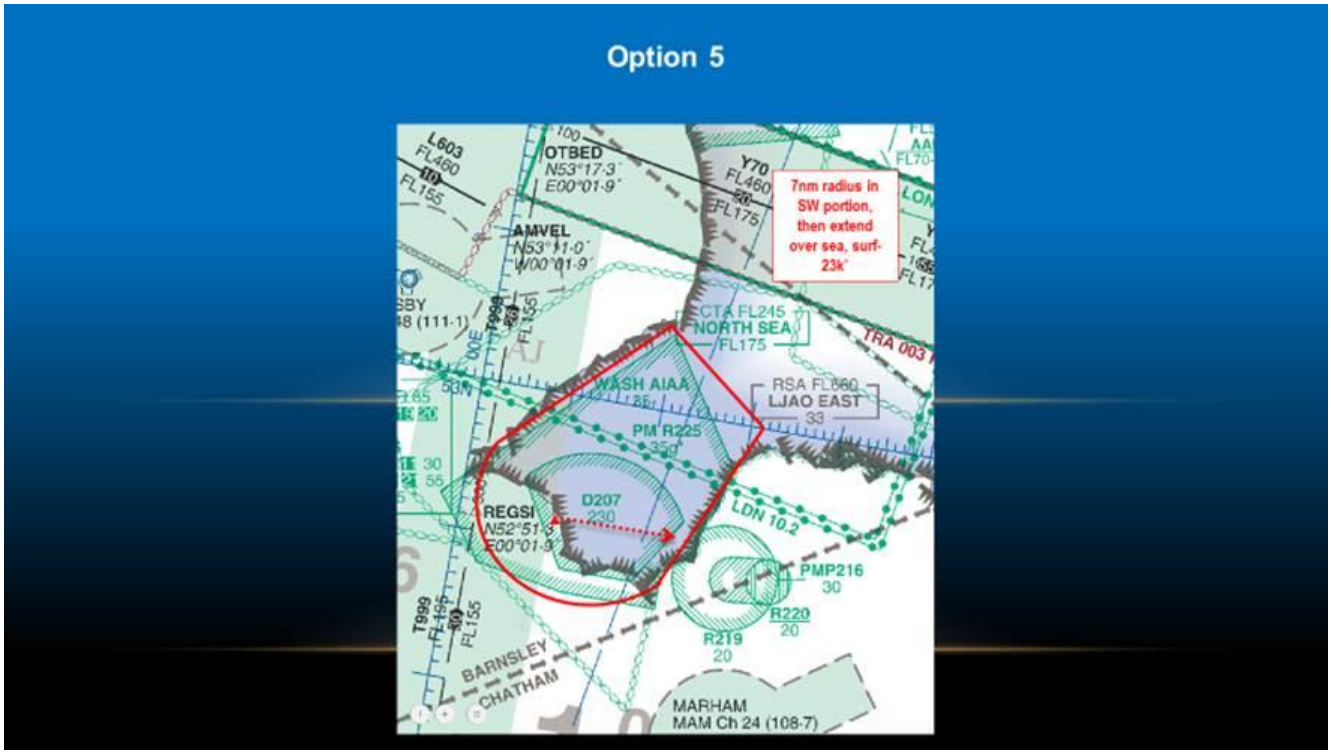


c. Enhanced Holbeach Airspace to cater for modern & future weapons; an **8nm** radius for simplicity and ease for sortie planning.

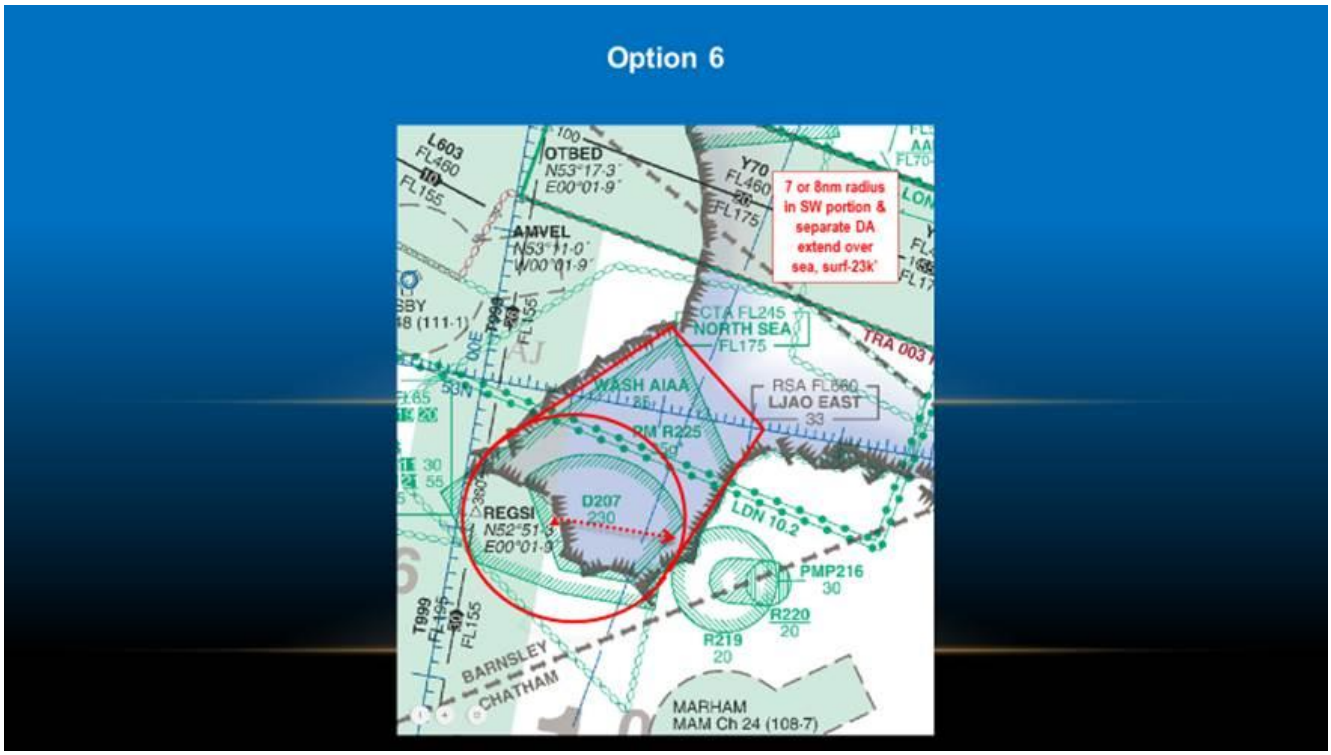
d. Enhanced Holbeach Airspace to cater for modern & future weapons; a **7nm** radius for simplicity and ease for sortie planning.



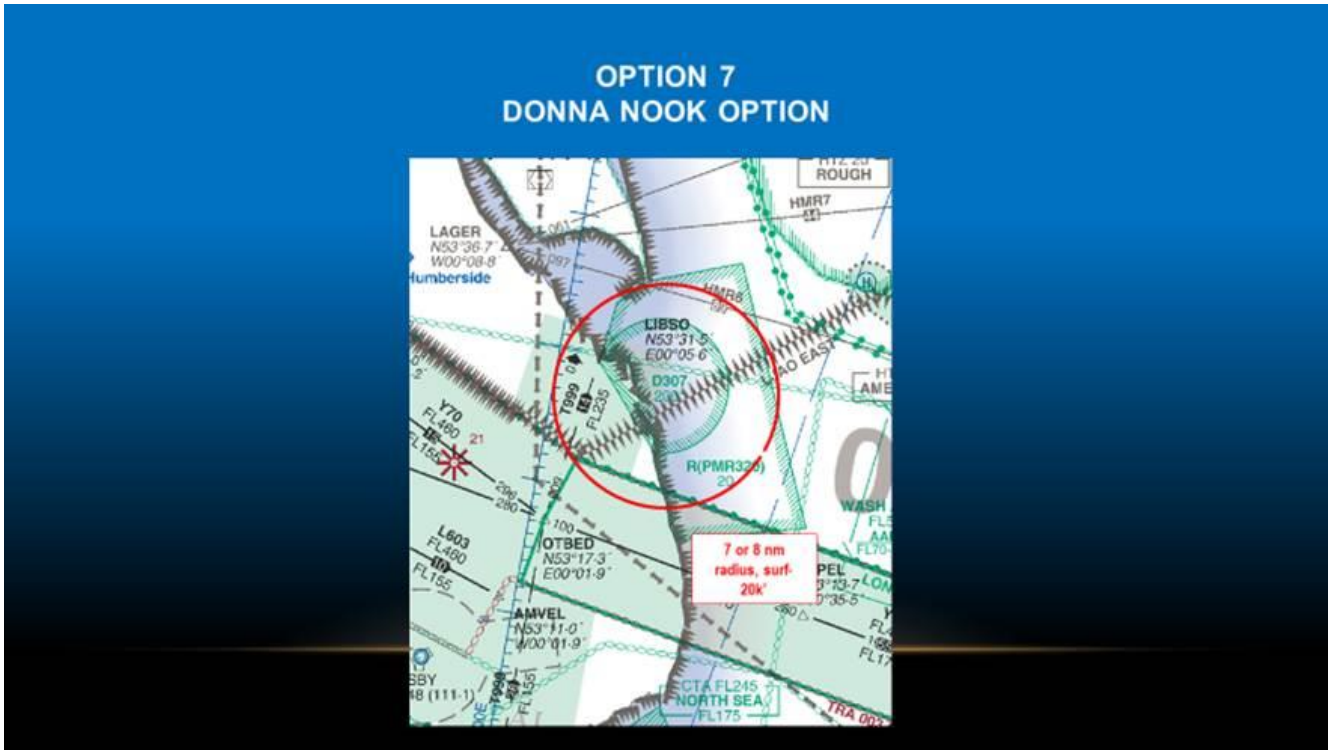
e. Enhanced Holbeach Airspace to cater for modern & future weapons; 7nm radius to the SW, then extending oversea to also cater for 'range spill out' when air systems operating in the range need to fly-out, plan, and re-attack.



f. As above, but separating the airspace to allow FUA; only booking what is required.



g. The original plan was to concurrently enhance DONNA NOOK, but the CAA Buffer Rule would mean that the airspace would likely be **reduced** (to remain clear of adjacent established airspace).



6. **Summary of Options.** Option 1 (no change) is not feasible as it does not comply with the SON and does not fulfil Design Principles a & d. Options 2-7 should remain for consideration and they would require the establishment of a segregated airspace structure. To factor in Design Principles d, f & h, the enhanced airspace should engulf Holbeach's current airspace.

7. The 1st Design Principle (*the design will provide a suitable safe training area*) is crucial. Options 2-7 enhance the current airspace to safely protect air systems conducting any of the modern & future weapons profiles that have been identified by the air system POCs. Option 5 or 6 will likely be more attractive to the range-users as it facilitates 'range spill out' – where an air system needs to extend out to plan & prep for the next target attack.

8. **Safety.** On 23 Jul 18, there was an Airprox in the 'range spill out' area at Holbeach (just outside the current airspace). An F16 was operating in Holbeach and temporarily exited the range 6NM to the NW (into Class G airspace) to prep for next target attack. At the same time, a pair of Tornados were flying just outside of the range at FL150 (under control of Coningsby Approach Radar), and reported an Airprox on the F16. The 2 DASOR reports can be found here and here. This recent occurrence adds weight to options 2-6 (ie to increase the airpscace).

9. **What Next?** I kindly ask the stakeholders to review the options and reply with any initial feedback you may have, by **6 Sep**. I will then measure the options against the Design Principles (iaw CAP 1616) and present the findings to the CAA; in time for the October Gateway deadline.

Please note that the above options <u>are not set in stone</u> – airspace design and further fine-tuning will not occur until stage 3 of this process (several months from now). At this early stage, I am only seeking your initial thoughts on moving ahead with either: no change, some sort of enhancement of Holbeach's airspace (options 2-6 are my initial drafts to give you an idea), or if you have any ideas that I may have missed.

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