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# Enabling RPAS Operations from RAF Fairford

## ACP-2021-078

Defence Airspace & Air Traffic Management



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# Statement of Need

In order to support NATO's Agile Combat Employment concept, the US Air Force is making significant infrastructure investments on airbases in the UK and other allied nations. There is an emerging requirement for military aircraft, including Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), to operate regularly from RAF Fairford. In accordance with CAP 722 – Unmanned Aircraft System Operations in UK Airspace – Guidance and Policy, beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations require either a CAA-approved Detect and Avoid (DAA) capability or to remain within a block of airspace that is segregated from other airspace users. This ACP aims to establish suitable segregated airspace to enable RPAS transition between RAF Fairford and medium- or high-altitude transit.

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# CAP1616 Process

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- CAP1616 typical timeline 110 weeks
- Designed to be a linear process as each stage shapes the next
- Process is scalable based on complexity of design and scope of affected stakeholders
- Engagement with affected stakeholders at every stage
- Impact of/on affected civil traffic patterns, not the military activity itself

Figure 2: Typical timeline for a Level 1 airspace change



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# Fairford ACP Timeline

Stage	Submission	Gateway
INITIATE ACP	12 Nov 21	
DEFINE GATEWAY	11 Mar 22	25 Mar 22
DEVELOP AND ASSESS GATEWAY	15 Jul 22	29 Jul 22
CONSULT GATEWAY	12 Aug 22	26 Aug 22
UPDATE AND SUBMIT	6 Jan 23	
DECIDE GATEWAY		28 Apr 23
IMPLEMENT		10 Aug 23
AIRAC 08/2023	12 May 23	

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# Activities to Date

8 Dec 21 – CAA initial assessment meeting

9/10 Dec 21 – Design Principles engagement letter sent (responses by 10 Jan 22)

20 Jan 22 – Response deadline extended to 10 Feb 22

Jan/Feb 22 – Ongoing responses to feedback/questions

Feb/Mar 22 – Preparation of Stage 1 submission document

Ongoing – Preparation of initial options

ACP-2022-008 has been initiated to provide a TDA ahead of the permanent airspace change. Anticipated activity from spring 2023. Engagement to follow separately.

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# Next Steps

11 Mar 22 – Stage 1 submission deadline (2 weeks ahead of gateway mtg)

25 Mar 22 – Stage 1 gateway meeting with CAA

Apr 22 – Distribute initial options engagement letter

Apr/May 22 – Engagement sessions with airspace users and local affected population (Teams and/or F2F)

May/Jun 22 – Ongoing preparation of Stage 2 submissions

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# Stage 2 – Develop and Assess

- 2A – Options Development
  - Engagement with same stakeholders as 1B (plus any new additions)
  - Do our initial options align with Design Principles?
  - General feedback on initial options? Have we understood your concerns?
  - We submit a Design Principle evaluation and evidence of engagement
- 2B – Options Appraisal
  - Assess impact of each option, including baseline ‘do nothing’
  - Qualitative cost-benefit analysis, environmental impact analysis, safety assessment
  - We produce short list of options and indicate preferred option
  - We identify evidence gaps ahead of full options appraisal in Stage 3

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# Working Assumptions

- Work ongoing with the CAA to approve USAFE RPAS activity in UK FIR
- Expectation that activity will primarily be between sunset and sunrise
- Expectation of approx. 3 activations per week
- Longer-term aspiration for RPAS to integrate (subject to approved DAA)
- As each RPAS platform is approved for integration, segregated airspace use will be reduced

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Any questions?

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