

**MINUTES OF NPAS BVLOS TRIAL ASSESSMENT MEETING  
HELD ONLINE ON 14<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2024**

14<sup>th</sup> August 2024

<b>Present</b>	<b>Appointment</b>	<b>Representing</b>
	Assigned Airspace Change Account Manager	CAA
	Assigned Technical Regulator	CAA
	Supporting Technical Regulator	CAA
	Assigned Environmental Regulator	CAA
	Assigned Engagement and Consultation Regulator	CAA
	Assigned ATS Inspector	CAA
	Engagement and Consultation Specialist	CAA (Observing)
	Airspace Change Account Manager	CAA (Observing)
	Innovation Services Principal	CAA (Observing)
	Innovation Services Specialist	CAA (Observing)
	Airspace Change Specialist	NATS
	Senior Consultant – NAU Delivery	NATS
	Head of Futures and Innovation	NPAS
	Project Assistant to Futures and Innovation	NPAS
	Global Sales Director	Vehicle Supplier
	Head of Sales Operations	Vehicle Supplier
Head of Customer Programme Management	Vehicle Supplier	
Head of Airworthiness	Vehicle Supplier	
SORA and Flight Authorisations Manager	Vehicle Supplier	

**CAA Assessment Meeting (Airspace Trial) Opening Statement**

The CAA noted that the Assessment Meeting Agenda and Materials were received in advance of the Assessment Meeting and confirmed that the documents must be published by the sponsor, together with minutes of the meeting, on the Airspace Change Portal page. The CAA explained the purpose of the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was an Assessment Meeting. The CAA reinforced that the sponsor was required to provide a broad description of their proposed approach to meeting the CAA’s CAP 1616 Airspace Trial requirements, but the CAA was not deciding whether the proposed approach met the detailed requirements of the CAA’s process at this stage. The purpose of the Assessment Meeting (set out in detail in CAP 1616) was broadly:

- for the Sponsor to present and discuss their Statement of Need,
- to enable the CAA to consider whether the proposal concerned falls within the scope of the formal airspace change process.

Additionally, the sponsor was required to provide information on how it intended to proceed to fulfil the requirements of the airspace change process and to provide information on timescales. Lastly, the sponsor was required to provide information on how it intended to meet the engagement requirements of the airspace change process.

	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>Item 1 – Introduction</b></p> <p>The purpose of this briefing was to inform the CAA regarding the statement of need related to airspace changes proposed for the NPAS BVLOS Trial and planned in accordance with the CAP1616 process. All attendees were introduced including their role in this airspace change proposal and the sponsor detailed the agenda for the meeting.</p>	<b>No actions</b>
<p><b>Item 2 – Statement of Need (discussion and review)</b></p> <p>This 6-month trial aims to support the integration of new airspace users by operating a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS), launched from NPAS Almondsbury, in an established Temporary Reserved Area (TRA) alongside crewed aircraft.</p>	<b>No actions</b>

<p>Under current legislation, a TRA is required to enable Beyond Visual Line Of Sight (BVLOS) flight operations with RPAS that are not equipped with Detect and Avoid systems similar to the principle of See and Avoid.</p> <p>The trial will collect data to help inform the production of new policies on the integration of new airspace users. As well as investigate the use case for RPAS to be a cost-effective addition to existing crewed aircraft operations, enabling a diverse, efficient, and responsive fleet for emergency services.</p> <p>The above text is copied from the statement of need. The CAA sought clarification on who could be responsible for activating the TRA and how this may occur. The sponsor described the options that exist, and that NOTAM would be used but the ownership for activation will be confirmed in the later stages of the CAP1616 process.</p> <p>There was no need to resubmit the statement of need.</p>	
<p><b>Item 3 – Issues or opportunities arising from proposed change</b></p> <p>To ensure that all parties had sufficient context, the sponsor provided some background information on the current airspace and usage.</p> <p>The trial would operate from the NPAS Almondsbury base which is located within Class G airspace adjacent to the Bristol CTA. NPAS Almondsbury base is shared with the Air Ambulance, and it is anticipated that both organisations' aircraft will primarily operate as normal. NPAS operates one helicopter from Almondsbury at around 1,000ft agl with a basic service from Bristol ATC. There are several areas of note nearby including a bird sanctuary, Bristol Airport, gliding sites, and restricted areas R145 and R154. The trial would consist of several phases with criteria to progress to the next phase.</p> <p>The vehicle supplier for the trial requested clarification on the surrounding Controlled Airspace (CAS), which was provided by multiple parties.</p> <p>The sponsor provided an overview of the issues and opportunities arising from the proposed change before discussing each in more detail.</p> <p>Opportunities and how to exploit them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informing policies on the integration of new users – Gather data on RPAS reaction to NPAS crewed aircraft.</li> <li>• Having access to Home Office funding for 'Futures and Innovation' – To be used within this financial year for innovation.</li> <li>• The link to the NPCC Police Aviation Strategy (2019-2029) – Alignment on reducing response times to safety incidents.</li> <li>• Long-term opportunities to - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduce the cost and carbon footprint of policing – RPAS vehicles are more efficient than traditional helicopters.</li> <li>○ Increasing the duration of operational activities and respond to incidents more efficiently – No need for crew handovers and more proactive operations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The CAA requested clarification regarding any requirements for a CAA ACP Decision to maintain/acquire funding. The sponsor described that a decision would be required by the end of the financial year and progress through the CAP1616 stages would need to be evidenced this calendar year. This is reflected in the provisional timescales, Item 5.</p> <p>Issues and mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted access to the TRA for other airspace users – Primarily operate during nighttime and split the TRA into segments to minimise the amount of airspace restricted at any one time.</li> <li>• Overflight of protected landscapes – HRA Screening Criteria information to be sent to the CAA.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sponsor to engage with Natural England to determine if the airspace change proposal will likely have a significant effect on the European sites in the zone of influence; CAA to send airspace usage assessment requirements to the sponsor.</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RPAS noise nuisance – RPAS selected has an internal combustion engine, and optional additional muffler, and is a traditional helicopter design. Therefore, it does not emit high frequency noise per an electric multirotor RPAS.</li> </ul> <p>The CAA highlighted that besides the HRA screening the sponsor must engage with Natural England to demonstrate that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect on the identified European sites. The Sponsor confirmed that this will be done.</p> <p>Which airspace users will have access to the TRA was discussed and the sponsor expanded that access may be extended to other airspace users in later phases of the trial once systems had been tested in early phases.</p> <p>The CAA reminded the sponsor that access to restricted areas would need to be expanded beyond existing agreements for RPAS to operate in the area. The sponsor confirmed that they are already engaging with those stakeholders.</p> <p>The CAA highlighted that airspace design and usage information will need to be provided while describing the current-day scenario during the CAP1616 process as well as noise impacts assessments if the airspace change proposal affects the distribution of air traffic below 7,000 ft. The sponsor acknowledged this, and the CAA took an action to send these requirements to the sponsor - (included in Item 4 – Process requirements).</p>	
<p><b>Item 4 – Process requirements</b></p> <p>The sponsor provided an overview of its plans to meet several key process requirements. This covered TDA policy, stakeholder engagement, and safety assessment.</p> <p>TDA Policy – A TRA made of several sections/segments would be used alongside a TMZ and basic service from Bristol ATC to facilitate the trial. TRA activation would occur via NOTAM.</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement – Email will be used to engage and seek feedback on the proposed trial operations over an engagement period of four weeks in October/November 2024.</p> <p>Safety Assessment – An OSC will be submitted at Stage 4 (Submit) in line with CAP1616G. Early trial phases would seek to acquire data and assurance that enables EC technologies to be used in later phases. NPAS pilots will be trained in BVLOS piloting for later phases of the trial.</p> <p><b>CAA guidance -</b></p> <p><b>General:</b></p> <p>The CAA highlighted that phase planning will need to be clear to ensure safety assurance and the sponsor acknowledged this.</p> <p>The CAA advised the sponsor that the OSC is known as the ORA and should be submitted at the earliest opportunity. The sponsor agreed to review the current maturity of the documentation and submit as soon as practicable.</p> <p><b>Environmental:</b></p> <p>The change sponsor must describe the current-day scenario, as per CAP 1616g para 3.23, and provide information on the airspace design (current structures, routes and instrument flight procedures and flight behaviours/patterns), airspace usage survey and analysis (current airspace users, aircraft types, frequency/number of movements, typical altitudes), operational diagrams, European sites overflowed below 3,000 feet and compensatory habitats.</p> <p>If the airspace change proposal affects the distribution of air traffic below 7,000 ft the change sponsor must undertake an assessment of noise impacts; CAP1616g para 4.11 to 4.15 and para 4.17 provide guidance on the requirements for noise assessment and scaling.</p>	<p><b>Assigned Airspace Change Account Manager (CAA) to arrange meeting regarding ATM Safety Assurance between the sponsor and relevant CAA parties</b></p>

The change sponsor must undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment, according to CAP1616g para 4.21 to 4.23 and CAP1616i para 9.8 to 9.10. The Habitats Regulations Assessment – Early Screening Criteria are listed in page 33 of CAP1616i. The change sponsor can use the MAGIC website (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk>) to identify European sites of concern in the zone of influence.

In addition, the change sponsor must engage with Natural England to determine if the airspace change proposal will have a significant effect on any European site in the zone of influence.

**Engagement:**

The CAA reminded the sponsor that engagement requirements can be found on Chapter 5 of CAP1616g and that justification for stakeholder selection is required. It was recommended that the sponsor include the BMFA and BHGA even though they are no longer on the NATMAC distribution list given the subject and potential impact of this trial. With regard to engagement with NATMAC members, any ones you have chosen not to engage with, should be justified with a rationale provided. The CAA also recommended that the sponsor considers including that AIC or AIP supplement could be used during their stakeholder engagement as timelines for the transition to AIP supplement is not yet known. The sponsor acknowledged the reminder and recommendations.

Paragraph 5.11 of CAP1616g suggests that six weeks is a reasonable starting point for an engagement period. It was noted from the presentation of the intention to undertake a period of engagement for four weeks, potentially starting in October that will avoid any public holidays, although worth noting that the school half term holidays normally take place towards the end of October. The suggested period of engagement should therefore be fully justified within the engagement report.

It was suggested that an engagement strategy could be produced and this can be shared with the CAA for comment as part of your engagement materials that you intend to send us for review in October. A template for this strategy can be found in Appendix B of CAP1616f.

**ATM:**

The CAA raised that the ANSP may need to do ATM Safety Assurance and an action was raised for the Assigned airspace change account manager to arrange a meeting between the relevant parties at the CAA and the sponsor to discuss any requirements.

**Item 5 – Provisional timescales\***

The sponsor reiterated, as discussed in Item 3, that a Stage 5 ACP decision is required by the 31st of March 2025 due to funding requirements. The provisional timeline was created by the sponsor in line with that requirement.

Activity	Estimated Date(s)
HRA Screening Criteria Information submitted to CAA for review	August 2024
Engagement Materials submitted to CAA for review	October 2024
Stakeholder Engagement	October/November 2024 (four weeks)
Submit ACP	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 (four-week assessment period)
AIC submission date	18 <sup>th</sup> April 2025
AIC date	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2025
Trial start	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2025

The trial is targeted for the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2025. There are many dependencies which could influence implementation dates, and implementation is subject to CAA approval. As such, all dates are aspirational, conditional on approval, and could be subject to change. However, the sponsor will resource presuming this date.

<p><b>CAA Post Assessment Meeting note:</b></p> <p>The Initial Timeline outlined in the Assessment Meeting presentation was put forward for analysis on 19 Aug 24 and was AGREED as proposed. The sponsor should notify the Airspace Change Account Manager if the Sponsor is unable to adhere to their proposed timescales and should submit a revised timeline for analysis at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p><i>* The timeline agreed may become subject to change by the CAA. As outlined in CAP 2541 it is not the CAA's intent to conduct a re-prioritisation of all ACPs currently in progress, but only to prioritise when we believe this is required. Such prioritisation will be conducted on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with the principles outlined in CAP 2541. Should it be considered necessary to reprioritise an ACP a member of the Airspace Regulation team will contact the sponsor directly.</i></p>	
<p><b>Item 6 – Next steps</b></p> <p>The sponsor described the actions it will take in the short-term including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicly announce the RPAS vehicle supplier selection</li> <li>• Expand on extant ConOps and submit ORA documentation.</li> <li>• Host a Town Hall Event in August for local stakeholders as required by Air Ambulance.</li> <li>• Submit HRA Screening Criteria information to the CAA for review after contacting Natural England.</li> </ul>	<b>No actions</b>
<p><b>Item 7 – Any other business</b></p> <p>No other business was raised by any parties.</p>	<b>No actions</b>

**ACTIONS ARISING FROM NPAS BVLOS TRIAL ASSESSMENT MEETING**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Action</b>
Draft minutes	Sponsor	Send minutes to the CAA for agreement
Publish minutes	Sponsor	Redact names from the minutes and upload to the CAA portal
CAP1616 process	Sponsor	Complete Stage 1
Contact Natural England	Sponsor	Contact Natural England to request their assessment of the proposals' potential impact on European Sites
Airspace usage assessment	CAA	Send airspace usage assessment requirements to the sponsor
ATM Safety Assurance	CAA	Arrange meeting regarding ATM Safety Assurance between the sponsor and relevant CAA parties

NPAS  
ACP Sponsor