

CAA PIR Review Report

Airspace Change Proposal Title	Future Combat Airspace
Airspace Change Proposal Reference	ACP-2020-026
Change Sponsor(s)	MOD
CAA Decision Date	27 Nov 23
Implementation Date	22 Feb 24
ACP Level	M1 with ground based environmental impacts below 7000ft scoped out

Instructions

In providing a response to each question and/or status, the following colour coding should be used:

- HAS RESULTED IN THE EXPECTED IMPACTS AND/OR OUTCOMES
- HAS NOT RESULTED IN THE EXPECTED IMPACTS AND/OR OUTCOMES See Part B.2
- POINTS TO NOTE/ISSUE TO HIGHLIGHT See Part B.3 if required

Executive Summary

CAA Decision

- This Post Implementation Review (PIR) Report is the final stage (7) of the CAP1616 process for ACP-2020-026.
- From the CAA Decision Log, the desired outcome of this ACP was as follows: *'The Ministry of Defence is seeking to secure Segregated Airspace in the form of a danger area, for use by the UK and coalition partners during large scale, highly complex training exercises that are used to prepare aircrews for operational service.'*
- From the CAA Decision Log, the final regulatory decision is as follows: *This ACP seeks to establish a permanent structure that is activated by NOTAM, designed to support specific large scale MoD exercises that have historically been conducted within this area. Through arrangements contained within the Letter of Agreement (LoA) between NATS and the MoD, if this proposed Danger Area were activated then other specified MoD Danger Areas would not be activated concurrently. This arrangement leads to a net*

environmental benefit when considering civil traffic transiting through UK airspace; this effect therefore highlights the importance of the arrangement within the LoA. Whilst this ACP proposes to introduce a new 'segregated' airspace volume, this proposal does limit activations, ensures activations are only made when necessary, conforms to standard airspace management processes, make provision for an ATS service for some impacted traffic and is in support of a Defence requirement; this ACP therefore aligns with the Airspace Modernisation Strategy and S70 of the Transport Act requirements. Subject to the conditions and recommendations noted in C2.1 above, where I would highlight the criticality of the airspace management conditions, I would recommend approving this ACP.

- From the CAA Decision Log, *It is recommended that:*
 - 1. *The Airspace Change Proposal is approved.*
 - 2. *The dispensation to SARG Policy 131 for a reduced lateral flight plan buffer is approved*
- *The proposal enables essential MOD training events whilst maintaining the safety of other airspace users by employing temporary segregation. The airspace design and its operation are sympathetic to other airspace users, with the likely outcome of being a net-benefit to en-route General Air Traffic due to the orientation of the new Danger Area and agreement with the MOD for the suppression of other adjacent danger areas. The publication and employment of the new Danger Area and associated structures are in keeping with international procedures, providing predictability to other airspace users whilst ensuring the ability to flight planning around it. The proposal is aligned with the AMS as it enables diverse use of airspace through segregating activity only when necessary and in a manner that considers the requirements of other airspace users not participating in the MOD exercises as much as is practicable.*

PIR chronology

- The CAA made its [data request](#) to the sponsor on 12 December 2023.
- The sponsor published the PIR on 21 March 2025.
- The feedback window was opened from 2 July 2025 until 30 July 2025. No feedback was received during this window.
- Feedback was received by the CAA from the Airspace Management Cell (AMC) on 31 July 2025, after the official feedback window had closed. The CAA have taken this feedback into account as part of the CAA PIR review process.
- During the CAA PIR review process, the CAA considered the following published information:
 - [Future Combat Airspace PIR Main Report](#)
 - [Future Combat Airspace PIR Annex A Operational Feedback](#)
 - [Future Combat Airspace PIR Annex B Newcastle International Airport Traffic Dispersion](#)
 - [Future Combat Airspace PIR Annex C Dundee Airport Limited Traffic Dispersion](#)

- [Future Combat Airspace PIR Enclosure A Defence Air Safety Occurrence Report](#)
- [Future Combat Airspace PIR Enclosure B TAG Greenhouse Gases Workbook](#)
- [Future Combat Airspace PIR Enclosure C Operational Diagrams](#)

PIR conclusion

- **The CAA has confirmed that the implemented airspace change satisfactory resulted in the expected impacts and outcomes (within acceptable tolerance limits) and the airspace change is confirmed.**

Post implementation review data that the CAA has considered in reaching its PIR conclusions		
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A.1	Safety Data	
A.1.1	The CAA has reviewed the PIR safety data, service provision explanation, stakeholder feedback and infringement data to ensure that a high standard of safety has been maintained throughout the data collection period (26 Feb 24 to 14 Mar 25). During this period it has been determined that the design and operation of Future Combat Airspace did not directly contribute to any AIRPROXs, losses of separation, instrument flight procedures not being flown correctly or serious incidents. The CAA is satisfied that the implementation of ACP-2020-026 Future Combat Airspace maintains a high standard of safety.	
A.2	Service provision/resource	
A.2.1	No evidence was presented, or feedback received, to indicate that additional resource was allocated as a result of the airspace change. The operation of the airspace falls under existing joint and integrated civilian and military planning cycles and processes.	
A.3	Utilisation of continuous climb operations and continuous descent operations	
A.3.1	Not required for the review.	
A.4	Infringements because of the change	
A.4.1	The CAA is satisfied that the data shows that introduction of Future Combat Airspace did not increase the risk of infringements.	

	The airspace was geographically designed to minimise impact on general aviation and there have been no reported infringement during the data period.	
A.5	Traffic figures (air transport movements)	
A.5.1	The CAA has reviewed the actual traffic figures provided, including the number of flights which were impacted by the airspace change and concludes that their numbers were lower than those expected in the forecast (45% fewer per activation), indicating that the airspace change has lesser impacts on airspace users than previously anticipated.	
A.6	Traffic dispersion comparisons	
A.6.1	The CAA has reviewed the heat map and trajectories of aircraft rerouting around the Future Combat Airspace when active and concludes that the airspace change is being operated as expected.	
A.7	Operational Feedback	
A.7.1	The CAA has reviewed stakeholder feedback and can confirm that there have been no unforeseen or unintended operational impacts. Feedback received has pointed to the airspace functioning as it was designed and as per local agreements and procedures. Relevant engagement with other airspace change proposals is either underway or has been identified.	
A.8	Denied access	
A.8.1	The airspace was designed with a position and base level that would reduce interactions with general aviation. The CAA can confirm that there have been no refusals of access formally recorded via the CAA Form FCS1522 regarding access to the airspace.	
A.9	Utilisation of standard instrument departures/standard instrument arrivals/instrument flight procedures	
A.9.1	Not required for the review.	
A.10	Letters of agreement	
A.10.1	The CAA placed two conditions on the airspace change relating to the LoA with NATS. Condition 1 was met prior to the airspace being activated for the first time. Condition 2 relates to informing the CAA of any potential changes to the airspace management and operational procedures contained within the LoA with NATS. The CAA can confirm that there has been no requirement to	

	amend any of those procedures contained within Condition 2. The CAA is satisfied that the agreed LoAs are safely managing the changes that have been implemented and are being utilised accordingly.	
A.11	Environmental factors	
A.11.1	The analysis of track miles, fuel burn and CO₂e emissions in the final options appraisal was based on the comparison between the activated Future Combat Airspace scenario and the simultaneous activation of D323 and D613 as the baseline. The assessment was limited to the boundary of UK airspace. However, for the PIR, the sponsor conducted the analysis by comparing the active Future Combat Airspace scenario with a baseline in which it was inactive. The analysis was conducted for flight trajectories within UK airspace as well as full trajectories from origin to destination. In doing so, the sponsor has satisfied the conditions of the airspace change, demonstrating that the benefits and disbenefits occur on a case-by-case basis, dependent on flight trajectories both within and outside UK airspace. A benefit within UK airspace may not always translate into a benefit over the full flight trajectory and vice versa. For the reasons outlined above, the PIR analysis is not directly comparable to the final options appraisal. The percentages of traded and non-traded emissions are also significantly different from those in the final options appraisal; however, this may be due to the different assessment methodologies and flight samples utilised in the two analyses. Nevertheless, the PIR analysis still demonstrates a benefit in terms of track miles, fuel burn and CO₂e emissions, albeit lower than previously anticipated. The CAA concludes that the airspace change has delivered the expected outcomes within acceptable tolerance limits.	
A.12	International obligations	
A.5.1	There were no international obligations identified as part of this ACP.	
A.13	Ministry of Defence operations	
A.13.1	This was an MoD airspace change and has had a positive outcome on MoD operations by facilitating large force exercises that meet Defence Priorities.	
A.14	Stakeholder feedback	
A.14.1	No feedback was received during the feedback window. However, one stakeholder submitted a response after the deadline concerning operating hour limitations within the ACP conditions. Following investigation, the CAA confirmed that no specific ACP condition relating to hours of operation existed, and the matter was therefore closed.	

A.15	Other PIR data requests	
A.15.1	Number, timings, and duration of the Danger Area activation. The sponsor predicted that there would be roughly 55 activations of 4-hour duration D514 per year. This figure was used for analysis purposes and was not a limitation on the number, or duration, of activations. During the period (26 Feb 24 to 14 Mar 25), there were 56 planned activations, with 42 actual activations. The cancellations were due to higher operational priorities (12 activation) and inclement weather (2 activations). For calendar year 2024 there were 36 planned activations with 22 actual activations (all cancellations were in this year). Confirmation that there are no impacts to civil traffic patterns below 7,000 ft. beyond those identified in the final submission. Following a review of the operational data, stakeholder feedback and sponsor analysis , the CAA is satisfied that there are no impacts to civil flight patterns below 7,000ft beyond those identified in the final submission	

PART B – CAA Confirmation of the Airspace Change Proposal			
B.1	Taking the above information into account, has the airspace change resulted in the expected impacts and outcomes?		YES
B.5	Regulator's Signature		
Technical Regulator			24 Jul 26
B.5	Airspace Regulation Principal - PIR approver: I concur with the regulators assessment and agree that the airspace change has resulted in the expected impacts and outcomes.		
Airspace Regulation Principal			24 Jul 26