

## Drone Industry Action Group

### Note of meeting, 21 February 2017, BEIS Conference Centre

#### **Attendees**

Iain Gray, Cranfield University (Chair)	Phil Binks, NATS
Simon Dale, First Person View	Joel Grundy, Thales
Richard Deakin, AirMap	Gary Clayton, UAVS
Chris Blackford, Sky Futures,	Wendy Welsh, Network Rail
Sue Wolfe, ARPAS-UK	Clare Muir, CAA
Andrew Heaton, UCLan	Simon Ritterband, Moonrock Insurance
Owen McAree, University of Sheffield	
Neil Kidd (for Richard Parker), Altitude Angel	Officials from DfT, BEIS and CAA
Aleks Kowalski (for Paul Rigby), ConsortiQ	

#### **Apologies:**

Jeegar Kakkad, ADS  
Malcolm Connelly, CyberHawk

#### **1. Introduction from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed the Group to its third meeting and went straight into the agenda.

#### **2. Update on public consultation: DfT**

The consultation launched on 21 December, just after the last IAG meeting. It closes 15 March. Responses have started to come through from a broad range of individuals, public bodies and businesses. DfT encouraged everyone to contribute their responses, in full or in part using the online electronic survey, or by email, presenting evidence and potential solutions wherever possible, and identifying their priority issues. DfT made no comments on input received to date; they would not start looking at these until the consultation closes.

There is likely to be further engagement after the consultation closes. DfT aims to publish 3 months after the consultation closes a summary of responses received and a statement of government plans. This would cover the next few years of Government plans. More widely, the DfT is also looking to begin developing a new Aviation Strategy, which would in part cover drones, and would look out over the next 10 years.

Points made in discussion included:

- DfT should outline a roadmap of critical milestones, to counter concerns that the UK is falling behind against competitor nations. In particular, the UK should be bold and not await EASA and ICAO agreements, for fear of moving at the pace of the slowest.
- EASA will announce a drone statement in April 2017 (a 'notice of proposed amendment'). CAA leads for the UK and is strident in support for 'proportionate regulation', which remains the dominant voice. However, much is still to be agreed.

- The future of drone insurance is not clear: eg public liability, training, how pay outs would be agreed, etc. If the aim is to ensure insurance is available to all of the market, a holistic view is required. A specific event with the insurance industry should be considered.
- DfT's forward plans should include a technology roadmap of steps towards BVLOS. The UK is in a global race and clarity from government (BEIS, InnovateUK and DfT), calling on industry expertise, is needed.

**Action:** The Chair to draft and circulate a response to the consultation on behalf of the IAG. This would state the importance and potential of commercial drone applications, outline an ambitious vision for the sector and seek broader adoption and faster pace. This would be circulated to the group for comment soonest.

### 3. Unmanned Traffic Management System

Joel Grundy (supported by Phil Binks) introduced the work of DfT's UK UTM expert group. While technology is still developing, other countries are progressing fast and it is time for the UK to commit to action. They outlined how a UTM landscape could support a range of innovative tools and solutions that would provide drone and other users with the information they needed, and stimulate a range of potential solutions. The mobile phone sector was cited as a successful precedent.

Aim is to develop a simple, robust approach that builds public trust, works within existing law and is of minimal cost to the exchequer. The group recommended, among other issues:

- Agreeing a set of interoperable standards on geography, data format and exchange, etc similar to current NATS, and with appropriate latency. The UTM would need pragmatic government or regulatory management.
- The UTM operators and pilots/ operators using the system would need to be licenced and known.
- Spectrum allocation and use would need to be monitored, and OFCOM informed.

The group identified immediate next steps including developing a programme plan, with stakeholders, milestones and likely costs.

Points raised in discussion included:

- This would be discussed at the next X-govt drones working group
- Any emerging action plan would need to be informed by consultation responses.
- This would need to fit with the current CAA Operating Safety Case system for drone flight permissions.
- Communication to the circa 2,400 existing drone businesses (and hobbyists) should be considered.
- There will be concern and resistance among other air users.
- Altitude Angel is on the global UTM association U-space working group. A number of different systems are likely to operate globally. The UK should include the best input from around the globe, including in Far East and Europe, as well as North America

- This work will impact on wider autonomous vehicle use (eg subsea and driverless vehicles) and should not be developed in isolation. It is also relevant to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee's work on air space management and modernisation activity.

The Chair thanked Joel and Phil and the rest of the group for their work and would explore with DfT/ BEIS what further role exists for the IAG on this topic. Members with specific issues or suggestions should direct these to DfT by 15 March, as part of their consultation responses.

#### 4. Standards

A short discussion on standards ensued. In many areas (oil and gas, utilities), large businesses are driving standards they expect as clients. There is industry consolidation too. It was agreed papers from IAG members, including on technical / software standards from Owen, would be presented at the next meeting.

#### 5. AOB

- a. **Action:** BEIS would draft a Mission Statement and Terms of Reference for the group, that could be made public, including on members and how to register an interest in membership.
- b. The chair proposed a 'one-year on' event, to widen awareness of and input from the sector was proposed. This would be considered further, and could include a role at the Commercial UAV show (November) or partnership with eg Royal Aeronautical Society.
- c. Members were made aware of NESTA's Flying High programme, regarding the future of drones in UK cities. <http://challengeprizecentre.org/>
- d. It was agreed that funding opportunities, including under the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund would be explored at a future meeting.

**Addendum:** Last week, BEIS published a literature review of the value of drones to the UK economy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/value-of-drones-to-the-uk-literature-review>

#### 6. Close and next meeting

The Chair thanked all for their participation. The next meeting of the IAG will be 27 April 2017. Agenda still tbc, but could include: Standards; Pathfinder programme; ISCF; Public consultation.