

Drones Industry Action Group

12 June 2018 – Thales, Reading

Attendees

Chair: Iain Gray

Brian Hampson, ADS
Mike Gadd, Altitude Angel
Graham Browne, ARPAS
James Dunthorne, ARPAS
Sue Wolfe, ARPAS
Geoff Pugh, Consortiq
David Lane, Edinburgh Centre for Robotics
Simon Ritterband, Moonrock Insurance
Mark Watson, NATS
Nisha Dewan, Nesta
John Laughlin, Nesta
Wendy Welsh, Network Rail
Nick Rogers, Sky Futures

Joel Grundy, Thales
Mark Westwood, Transport Systems Catapult
Alfred Jackson, Transport Systems Catapult
Nikos Pronios, Innovate UK
Officials from DfT and BEIS

Apologies:

Simon Merriman, BSI
Aleks Kowalski, Consortiq
Stuart McGlynn, Cyberhawk

1. The previous minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record. Iain noted apologies and actions were reviewed. One action was outstanding which was for Iain and BEIS to review the standards document sent by Sue for approval before circulating to the group.
2. David Lane was invited to talk about the RAS Sector Deal and how he sees drones being integrated.
 - 2.1. David provided a brief history of robotics engagement with government, starting with the 8 Great Technologies in 2013 and the creation of the RAS Special Interest Group (RAS SIG). The RAS SIG roadmapped the future of the sector over 2 years, culminating in the RAS 2020 Strategy (available online) and leading to over £300M government investment, and over £200M from industry. Five strands were identified as needing support to strengthen the sector: coordination, assets, challenges, clusters, and skills, most of which has been taken up.
 - 2.2. He also shared a brief history of the RAS Sector Deal. A submission was made in February 2018 as part of a BEIS gateway process, which was returned with comments. Per further discussion with No.10, we are no longer aiming for a Sector Deal though the content and 'asks' remain the same. The focus is on creating a Sector Council to drive forwards the coordination strand which is lacking from the original strategy, as well as highlighting the ongoing skills gap.
3. Further discussion was had around challenges facing both RAS and drones:
 - 3.1. Development of public trust – the Flying High Challenge was identified as tackling this barrier effectively and it is essential to the development of the drones sector.
 - 3.2. UTM. The following points were raised:
 - Only government/regulators can make a decision around commercialisation of a UTM, in order to deal with legitimacy and trust issues.
 - UTM should be a broad brushed definition - is an evolution. Need a broad framework to work to in the first instance and be fit for purpose - needs not answer all questions and challenges but should have an understanding of where the risks and liabilities lie.
 - There also needs to be a critical mass of drones to make UTM feasible, of which there is currently no sandbox in place to test.

3.3. Procurement – Government as customer

A discussion was had around the efficiency of SBRI, with reference to the US example. It was noted the emergency services have no coherence across their procurement systems. The complexity and inefficiency of both these systems makes it difficult for business to interact with government, who are often a key first customer and so useful for attracting more business. City Deals (the precursor to Sector Deals) were suggested as a possible solution to circumvent this process.

3.4. Funding

Clarification was sought over the difference between a Sector Deal and ISCF funding. Sector Deals, managed by BEIS, currently do not explicitly bring funding with them. If a sector presents a deal which includes R&D needs, then the ISCF, managed by UKRI, can be used as a potential funding source. As such, the ISCF can be applied to at the appropriate times by any organisation with an R&D need.

4. The Transport Systems Catapult presented the slides from the roadmapping workshop. A second workshop to explore further detail in the slides is to be held on 10 July.

- A key question to emerge from the workshop was around developmental v segregated airspace. Many agreed in the meeting that we should not be asking for additional segregated airspace.
- Agreed that the IAG endorses the roadmap. Publication date is for July – either Farnborough or Flying High Challenge when ministers present.

Action: all to reflect on main points and feedback views.

5. Government Updates:

5.1. DfT updated on the progress of their impending consultation, due July. The measures under consultation include:

- Proposals for regulating and mandating the use of ‘apps’ on which pilots would file flight plans ahead of take-off
- Additional powers for the police to enforce the law
- Using new counter-drone technology to protect public events and critical national infrastructure, and stop contraband reaching prisons
- Introducing minimum age restrictions for drone owners in addition to the new tests they will need to take
- Whether the 1km restriction around aerodromes, introduced as an amendment to the Air Navigation Order in May this year, is sufficient.

5.2. There was no BEIS update as this was covered in item 2.

6. Update – Nesta Flying High Challenge

- Nesta are in the final stages of their project. Nesta have applied for ISCF Wave 3 funding for the second phase of their project, with Ocado leading the consortium (and submitting a further bid). They are also preparing for the report launch, to be held on 23rd July at Nesta offices, and are inviting both DfT and BEIS ministers.
- Agreed that IAG will do all it can to support the Flying High Challenge.

7. Sue Wolfe updated on Standards/Comms – the Standards document will be circulated asap.

ARPAS will publish and promote minutes etc, members to also promote the IAG as previously discussed (i.e. through social media and other comms channel available to them). The Standards sub group will be led by Graham and James, with Sue’s departure. Wendy – noted UAS Private Level 1 released for comment, as per Simon Merriman’s earlier email. Network Rail are happy to promote via retweets, website.

Action: standards paper to be circulated to IAG members.

8. AOB: The IAG thanked Joel Grundy for hosting the IUK-IAG event at Thales, and Wendy for her outstanding contribution to the IAG as she moves on to a new role.