<u>**Drone Industry Action Group**</u>

<u>**Note of 26 October 2016 meeting**</u>

Attendees

Iain Gray, Cranfield University (Chair)
Chris Blackford, Sky Futures
Richard Deakin, AirMap
Phil Binks, NATS
Wendy Welsh, Network Rail
Joel Grundy, Thales
Jeegar Kakkad, ADS
Sue Wolfe, ARPAS-UK

Owen McAree, University of Sheffield
Richard Parker, Altitude Angel
Paul Rigby, ConsortiQ

Simon Ritterband, Insurance4Drones
Malcolm Connelly, CyberHawk

Officials from BEIS, CAA and DFT

Apologies: Gary Clayton, UAVS

1. **Introduction from the Chair**

The Chair warmly welcomed the attendees and set out the vision for the group: to identify and respond to the barriers for the drone industry's commercial and wider economic growth.

He also welcomed the collaboration between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Transport in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to engage with Government openly to develop policy,

He noted that as the industry evolved to operating beyond visual line of sight, the IAG presented a significant opportunity to ensure a broad range of business voices (including R&D and academia) could inform, support and shape the business environment and regulatory landscape in which companies in this sector operate. Other countries were taking bold steps to deliver pro-drone environments in which research, innovation and testing could be stimulated.

In response, the Government reiterated its commitment to partner with industry to support the growth of commercial drone applications providers in the UK, the essential process of ensuring safety, privacy and security, and the importance of this for public acceptance. In initial comments, attendees queried whether the group would benefit from participation of drone manufacturers and end users (private and public).

> **ACTION: BEIS to liaise with the Chair on widening participation.**

2. **HMG approach and group discussion**

The Department for Transport introduced the cross-government drone programme's work to date, which aims to harness the economic and public benefits of this dynamic industry, whilst committing to addressing safety, security and privacy risks, which are of public concern. Negative stories about drones can dominate the headlines, whereas positive stories of drone capability and application tend not to make headlines (more the business / tech pages). Acceptability remains a key issue,

although there are positive examples from other sectors. For example, whilst smart phones are arguably more invasive to privacy than drones, they are widely accepted by the public now, whereas at the outset, with fewer users, this was less clear. DfT is considering its comms strategy on drones, building upon the CAA's current safety awareness campaign, and welcomed input. However, DfT also emphasised that there is only so much Government can do, and therefore industry need to advocate for themselves. Future meetings would consider what more the group could do.

ACTION: All to share positive media stories or opportunities with DfT.

DfT outlined their current workstreams on public engagement and communication, safety, regulation and pathfinders, developing an unmanned traffic management system and counter drones strategy for important assets. Their work is expected to cover all classes of drones and all users. DfT and BEIS underlined there is currently no dedicated funding for this, but that a number of public sources exist (eg Horizon 2020, InnovateUK, centres of excellence at universities, ATI). Any public consultation on future drone policy and regulation would likely last for 8-10 weeks and include stakeholder workshops. No launch date has yet been agreed.

Approach: IAG members raised, that in consultation, government should be aware that to generate balanced, evidenced responses, they would need to ask questions that weigh up trade-offs, and are not overly simplistic. Policy and communications should focus less on enforcement (no drone zones, criminal punishment) and more on outlining benefits and ensuring operator competency and equipment safety.

Registration/ public awareness: IAG members said that the potential costs and benefits of a public registration system (similar to USA) should be weighed up. Such a system could give confidence to the public that drones could be tracked and misuse punished. Options for improving guidance and leisure users' awareness of the law were welcomed, including the improvement of CAA safety guidance, and the role for manufacturers and vendors (online and instore).

Standards: Competency and procurement standards for commercial drone use by industry is a key requirement for the drone sector to be successful. Some sectors are developing their own standards already, driven by procurement requirements, and this was likely across all sectors in time. A base level of competency, on top of which sector standards could be added, still needs to be defined. The current CAA safety case approach is clear, but would need to adapt as we move towards BVLOS and autonomy (eg what's the point of pilot competency? how do software or hardware gain approval?). DfT stated it would welcome a proposal of standards of competency from the IAG as a starting point, and several IAG members.

ACTION: IAG members to draft a proposal setting out the standards of competency required for different drone operations, according to the risk of the type of operation and the type of drone.

The group briefly considered segmentation of the market by size/ capability, insurance standards and testing facilities. The next meeting will consider development of principles for a drone traffic management system.

ACTION: Attendees to feed comments on policy proposals to DfT.

3. Close

The next meeting of the IAG will be held on 1st December, with the aim to hold meetings roughly every 6 weeks. The Chair welcomed the idea that groups of individuals could take forward some of the industry actions outside of the meeting structure.