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Drone Industry Action Group 26 April 2022 – Minutes (by videoconference)

Attendees:

CHAIR: Iain Gray, Cranfield University

Rikke Carmichael, Network Rail
Philip Tarry, Halo Drones
Richard Deakin, Stratospheric Platforms
John McKenna sees.ai
David Savage, Excelerate
Callum Farrell, Excelerate
Anthony Venetz, Across Safety
Mark Westwood Cranfield University
William Barnes, Ajuno
Nathan Butler Drone Major
Craig Lippett Animal Dynamics
Brian Hampson ADS
Gareth Beverley Consortiq
Russell Porter NATS
Mark Watson NATS
Simon Ritterband Moonrock
Samantha-Lea Wootton BSI
Craig Roberts PWC
Stuart Gosney HS2
Owen McAree Aerofirm
Dominic Walker Aveillant

Graham Brown ARPAS-UK
James Matthews PA Consulting
Hector Figueredo Qinetiq
James Cranswick Deloitte
Dave Pankhurst BT
Louisa Smith Apian
Aleks Kowalski Neuron
James Dunthorne Neuron
James Scanlan Southampton University
Mike Gadd Blue Bear
Simon Foreman Blue Match GLocal
Ian Williams-Wynn Blue Bear
Chris Daniels (Flare Bright) (Guest)
Paul Chapman Ofcom
Dan Sumner ORE Catapult
Nikos Pronios InnovateUK
Gary Cutts Future Flight
Stuart Lawless Met Police
Liam Braeger SA Catapult
Arunprakash Jayaprakash SA Catapult
Callum Holland CAA
Officials from BEIS, DfT, Home Office

1. Introduction and Ambition Statement update

Iain Gray recapped recent DIAG activity. As DIAG chair, he had written to Aviation Minister Robert Courts responding to the Future Flight consultation in November 2021, including asking for a meeting. In March 2022 he met with Ministers Courts and Freeman (Innovation Minister) to underline the DIAG focus on professional, commercial use of drones and their benefits. He outlined the emerging PWC numbers and use cases and critical sector needs include a well-resourced CAA, swifter processing of OSC applications, a clearer plan for electronic conspicuity and traffic management, and support for public sector uptake. Both were positive, and Minister Freeman asked about how to maximise UK sector manufacturing potential. Both agreed to support sector momentum in launching the publication.

Iain and BEIS updated that the Ambition Statement was receiving a number of comments from the sector and different parts of government. In conversation, points were made about telling a dynamic story of the capability of this broad and vibrant community, and ensuring regulations enable the broader drone uses cases, such as high altitude platforms.

2. Government updates

Future Flight had completed Phase 3 selection, which would soon announce winning projects of roughly 6x the scale and scope of Phase 2, including drone projects of real ambition. Being a competitive process, with limited funds, were unfortunately lots of good projects didn't make the cut but Future Flight would aim to support those companies too with wider integration support and working groups. The challenge has been extended by 3 mths to Summer 2024. A small amount of money remains which would likely support small projects including standards (with BSI) and social science studies. Other activities would include broadcast of Phase 2 successes, continuation of

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Airspace Integration Working Group, and two new working groups on Safety Case and Community Integration. Following user engagement to understand and drive public acceptance, a [Sciencewise](#) study (with Ipsos Mori) would be published soon.

Ofcom updated they are working closely with the CAA on use of enabling drone use of spectrum for communications and connectivity. A discussion document on the Spectrum Management Strategy for the next 5 years was [published recently](#), which includes a commitment to enabling growing demand for the use of drones and an imminent consultation on authorisation for use of mobile spectrum for drone flight.

DfT updated they are preparing a legislative plan for 12 months ahead and for Farnborough in July. Recent activity included building US relationships with FAA and NASA incl drones and AAM.

CAA is consulting on their [Airspace Modernisation Strategy](#). In discussion the following points were made:

- The CAA continually seeks to improve operational efficiency and response rates. The current SLA for a standard permission renewal is twenty-eight days but CAA is currently turning around these applications in seven. CAA is an active contributor into the JARUS working group on PDRA development and intends to expand the number of them in use to cover a wider array of operational situations. As we move across to the SORA risk assessment methodology CAA will choose which JARUS PDRA's should also be adopted and amended to fit with UK specificities. CAA is also in a position to create UK specific PDRA's outside the bounds of JARUS if desirable.
- CAA currently have no formal plans to automate the assessment or approval process.
- The current consultation on extending transitional and legacy UAS provisions has been well received. We will continue to push for ever-better engagement with the regulated community. We will soon consult on an important revision to the UAS Implementing Regulation Acceptable Means of Compliance and Guidance Material.

BEIS reminded the sector that acquisitions of (over 25% of shares in) UK drone companies would need to be notified to government under the National Security & Investment Act, details [here](#).

Home Office: The Current Counter-UAS strategy was undergoing a refresh in 2022 and Home Office are keen to get DIAG / sector input into this process.

3. PWC Skies without Limits 2.0

The report was nearly concluded and would show the potential of the sector looking out to 2030, animate some of the leading current capability and detail the key barriers and enablers including perception (of public and within industry), implementation, technology, regulation and skills.

AOB:

Simon Ritterband asked operators with any BVLOS experience to share their historic flight data: *"Submissions for BVLOS insurance have increased dramatically in 2022. Every policy is priced individually and takes time to gather required information. Moonrock has convened a few underwriters to simplify and standardise the costing and evaluating process and seeks historical data on flights, locations, systems, and accidents. Simon Ritterband is in touch with CAA. If DIAG members have information on BVLOS operations of any kind they would be willing to contribute this would benefit the wider industry as well as being shared back with the sector and government."*