

**Drone Industry Action Group
21 January 2021 – Minutes
(by videoconference)**

Attendees:

Chair: Iain Gray, Cranfield University	John McKenna, sees.ai
Aleks Kowalski, Skypointe	Nick Rogers, KinectAir
Chris Blackford, Sky Futures	Neil Watson, Thales
Hector Figueredo, Qinetiq	Paul Rosbotham, Vodafone
Owen McAree Aerofirm	Anthony Venetz, Across Safety
Graham Brown, ARPAS	Fred Harbottle, Drone Major
James Dunthorne, ARPAS	Gareth Beverley, Consortiq
Simon Whalley, Skypoints	Scott Biddle, PA Consulting
Mike Gadd, Altitude Angel	James Matthews, PA Consulting
Stuart McGlynn, Cyberhawk	Samantha-Lea Wootton, BSI
Will Arinze, Animal Dynamics	Gary Cutts, Future Flight
Philip Tarry, Halo Drones	Nikos Pronios, Innovate UK
Daniel Wilson, BT	George Nicola, Satellite Applications Catapult
Dave Pankhurst, BT	Paul Febvre, Satellite Applications Catapult
Neil Watson Thales	Mark Westwood, Connected Places Catapult
William Barnes, Frazer-Nash	Andrew Chadwick, Connected Places Catapult
Will Arinze, Animal Dynamics	Paul Chapman, Ofcom
Yoge Patel, Blue Bear	
Richard Nichols, Airwards	Officials from BEIS, DFT and Home Office
Craig Roberts, PWC	

1. Welcome from the Chair

Iain Gray welcomed all to the first meeting of 2021. The London and Edinburgh based drone shows had presented a great visual start for drones to the New Year. The industry was well positioned, despite Covid, with Future Flight's significant support for drone operations and a number of recent examples of drones delivering for industry gaining headlines.

2. Government updates

BEIS update: The [*National Security and Investment Bill*](#) was progressing through Parliament. It was expected that drone operations would fall within scope of the 'Advanced Robotics' sector, one of 17 'mandatory notification sectors'. This would require all companies considering inward investments or acquisition from overseas to gain prior approval from government.

The **Regulatory Horizons Council** had held a workshop with c.35 aviation sector participants to consider how UAS would operate within the complex aviation system in 2030. The RHS team was using futures techniques to explore critical uncertainties to develop and test a range scenarios relating to commercialisation and innovation in the sector. Key variables expected to drive further scenario development included climate change, emerging business models, advances in AI, dominance of big tech, and public acceptance.

The RHC process aimed to complement Future Flight, focusing on uncertainties and taking forward regulatory aspects that emerge. **Action:** The RHC team welcomed DIAG participation and feedback.

DfT: The Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft (ATMUA) Bill was at Report Stage in the House of Lords – this gives all members of the Lords a further opportunity to examine and make

amendments to the Bill. For more detailed information on the amendments and all papers related to the Bill, please [use this link](#).

The ATMUA Bill completed Report stage on 21 January and there will now be a third reading in the House of Lords on 28 January. The next step is introduction of the Bill in the House of Commons. All dates when known will be updated at the above link in Bill Stages. There was one vote on an amendment requiring the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament a review of legislation relating to Unmanned Aircraft within six months of the Bill becoming an Act. The vote was unsuccessful so that clause will not be added to the Bill. All government amendments were agreed to and shall now be added to the Bill.

Ofcom: Action: Drone IAG members were invited to contribute to the [live consultation](#) on Ofcom's 2021 plan of work, including authorisations for spectrum applicable for drones.

Ofcom's technical team is currently studying the potential impact of interference with Air Traffic control radar and other systems. They hope to be in a position to share some of the initial findings with the group shortly. Ofcom will seek to engage with IAG members regarding these findings with a view to find solutions that will mitigate the interference risk.

Home Office: Home Office is supporting DfT on the ATMUA Bill's passage through Parliament. The CPNI's Tranche 2 'detect, track and identify' Counter-UAS testing programme was underway, and includes support to vendors. Further information: CUAV@cpni.gov.uk

Interested parties were encouraged to attend *Security & Policing 2021* (9–11 March) where UK and international delegates would discuss the latest developments in their fields ([Information and registration](#))

CAA update (*NB. submitted in writing*): Following the UKRI launch event on 15th December the Future Flight consortia have started to submit project details to the CAA via an onboarding questionnaire. This will enable CAA to establish the support required for Phase 2. From February CAA will start engagement with consortia who have submitted their questionnaire, giving them access to the CAA Innovation Hub services and wider subject matter experts across the CAA.

UAS Unit: New regulations came into effect on 1 Jan: CAP722 has been updated to reflect these. The CAA UAS website provides regular updates. www.caa.co.uk/uas

2. Future Flight, Gary Cutts

[48 projects had been announced](#) and are underway with a number of new participants and good geographic spread, including urban and rural. FF aims to develop a range of connected use cases and capabilities to connect and support the transition and integration to a new more autonomous, lower carbon UK aviation system. The current portfolio includes significant support for drone companies:

- **Future Flight Phase 2:** c.£30m. 34 projects across two parts (separated by size). Due diligence had taken additional time, reflecting the challenges of supporting complex consortia during this difficult period for the aviation sector.
- **Covid response:** 14 projects: first projects are coming to conclusion already and most were expected in Q1 2021. There had been some operational challenges in initiating the Covid process.

Programme aims are to catalyse investment into new UK aviation markets, deliver societal benefits (better connectivity with lower carbon) and drive sector innovation. The team was looking ahead to Phase 3 where they move from specific projects to more detailed connectivity and systems

demonstrations. Phase 3 is very much open to new entrants, concepts and consortia. The FF team is establishing the overall architecture but would need multiple partners and significant convergence towards each other to achieve it, including across safety cases, market studies, social science insights into areas such as public acceptance, etc. They would be driving media activity.

Action: Gary welcomed input on the potential benefits and challenges of new UAM technologies, as well as responses to the following questions:

- What is the right ambition for March 2024 for drones?
- How many projects of what scope should they fund?
- How should they support building the consortia?
- What drone technology flows to larger vehicle segments?
- What is missing?

Further updates would be shared with the group once available, including on:

Roadmapping: Future Flight is working with sector stakeholders to develop a multi-year roadmap for the wider system of systems. They expect a final report in a few weeks.

Technical study: This study of a possible future UK aviation system was expected to be published soon. Comments on this highly technical, 200+ page report would be welcomed.

Socio-economic report (released 25 Jan 2021): Future Flight published a viability assessment of six scenarios using drones or advanced air mobility technologies instead of current transport methods.

3. Pathfinder 'Accelerator' programme: Andrew Chadwick

2021 would see a Pathfinder extension, as outlined in the attached slides. The aim was to help the sector drive impact at speed. The Pathfinder team looked forward to working with the Drone IAG.

Action: Andrew would welcome comments, especially on key technical challenges CPC should consider for the D-TRIG programme (expected to take a similar approach to the [current T-TRIG](#)).

4. AOB

Phil Tarry invited all to join the [AeroSociety seminar, 9 Feb](#) on the new regulatory regime for drones.

Graham Brown updated on other sector-facing events: [Drone X](#) (aiming to be live at Excel 26 May 2021); [GEObusiness](#) (November, also Excel) and [Commercial UAV Europe](#) (virtual webinars).

ARPAS, as part of Government's Kickstart scheme for unemployed 16-24 yr olds, was aiming to run 6 month training programmes for UAV operation. **Action:** Contact Graham to discuss/ participate.

Airwards: Richard Nichols updated that they +75 Entrants from +20 countries, with +5 expert advisors, +10 Partners, +5 Sponsors and +10 Judges confirmed. Media is going well: +15 press articles ([see here](#)), +10k impressions on social media and +1k followers. Richard would welcome help to help deliver impact in Yr1 to advance the drone industry, in particular highlighting positive use cases, encouraging collaboration across industries and helping achieve public acceptance.

Key opportunities:

- 30% DIAG members discount code for submissions: (email richard@airwards.online for this)
- Nominations for the [people's choice categories](#) (free of charge + industry and public vote).
- Apply to be a judge via [this application form](#).

Airwards **deadline** for partners for Yr1 is **12 February**. Submissions close mid-March. Airwards Winners' Week is 24-28 May 2021.