

The Second UK State Consultation on a Harmonised Transition Altitude (TA): Consultation Overview

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Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

A harmonised Transition Altitude (TA) across the UK at a higher level, along with the rollout of Performance Based Navigation (PBN) procedures, has long been acknowledged as a cornerstone of the Future Airspace Strategy and an enabler for projects such as the London Airspace Management Programme (LAMP) to realise their maximum operational potential.

The UK CAA has worked in close collaboration with both NATS and the Ministry of Defence since the first TA Consultation in 2012 in developing a Concept of Operations (CONOPs) and supporting assurance papers. Internationally it has enjoyed a close working relationship with the Irish Aviation Authority in developing a harmonised, higher TA for an across Functional Airspace Block (FAB) deployment. We have also collaborated closely with CAA Norway in its plans for a harmonised, higher TA. Whilst EASA's work on a Harmonised European Transition Altitude did not conclude in any specific recommendations, the UK's work on TA will inform much of the planned guidance material to Member States.

This second TA Consultation focuses on obtaining industry feedback on the CAA's draft CONOPs and its supporting assurance papers. It is not a consultation on whether the UK should harmonise its TA at a higher level; that was completed in 2012. Feedback from industry stakeholders will be used to refine the draft CONOPs, its assurance papers and to inform implementation planning.

Deployment of a new TA has always been intrinsically linked to the deployment of modernised airspace structures, to both maximise their efficiencies and limit some of the negative impacts on Radio Telephony (R/T) that might be incurred during major airspace changes. It is important that the draft TA CONOPs is fully refined before the long process of airspace re-design work commences in earnest; hence this second TA Consultation on the CONOPs itself.

Your contribution to this work is extremely important to us and will provide a measure of both assurance and challenge that we are on the right track. I look forward to your points of view.

Mark Swan

Mark Swan Group Director, Safety & Airspace Regulation
October 2015

1 Introduction

The UK CAA undertook a consultation during 2012 to ascertain aviation stakeholders' feedback on the principle of raising the UK's various Transition Altitude (TA) values to a harmonised value, both inside and outside of Controlled Airspace. The consultation concluded that two thirds of respondents favoured a change from the current mix of Transition Altitudes to a harmonised value; 18,000ft amsl was agreed as the target value.

Since then, working in partnership, NATS, MOD, and the UK CAA (the TA Project Team) have undertaken a programme of work to develop a draft Concept of Operations (CONOPs) for a harmonised TA of 18,000ft amsl, which is the focus of this second UK CAA consultation.

The purpose of this second UK CAA consultation is to garner feedback from aviation stakeholders on the proposed CONOPs and supporting documentation to ensure that they are robust, representative of the operational environment and reflective of industry feedback. It does not cover the content of the 2012 consultation, nor does it ask if stakeholders favour a change to the TA as this was completed within the first consultation.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the various elements of the consultation documentation and to ask aviation stakeholders to respond to this consultation in order to provide the State with feedback which enables a decision to be made on the way forward.

The Concept of Operations (CONOPs) is the main document being consulted upon during this consultation process. It is offered as a complete and interacting package underpinned by the supporting documentation and it should therefore be read in conjunction with these other documents. The document set consists of:

- the [CONOPs](#);
- the [State Safety Assurance Report](#); and,
- the [Final Safety Report on the Nominal Vertical Separation Minima \(VSM\) concept](#)

It should be noted that stakeholder validation of the CONOPs as a whole will not be inferred as validation of specific elements of the document for selected implementation.

2 Managing the consultation

This consultation is mainly aimed at the aviation industry and it is intended that the process will be managed on-line.

The main consultation documentation, including a list of Commonly Asked Questions & Answers about the State TA Project, will be published on the TA Consultation webpage. The list of Commonly Asked Questions will be updated if necessary on a fortnightly basis throughout the consultation as new queries are raised by consultees and the State feels that there is value in promulgating the answer to the question more widely. It should be noted that the Commonly Asked Questions & Answers are separate to the list of Questions for Industry Stakeholders. In order to ensure that all stakeholders are presented with the same questions to respond to, the on-line list of questions for stakeholders will NOT be changed once the consultation has started unless errors are detected in the content or the way the question is written.

Stakeholder responses will not normally be acknowledged, although stakeholders may be contacted for clarification of their queries if this is considered necessary. Stakeholders are therefore requested to review the Commonly Asked Questions & Answers to check whether or not an answer is available before submitting a query.

The consultation will run from 23rd November 2015 until 24th February 2016 inclusive and the findings will be published in an Aviation Stakeholder Consultation Feedback Report which will be placed on the TA Consultation website in Spring 2016.

The minimum lead in time from a decision to implementation would be approximately two and a half years; however a decision will not be made on the start time for this implementation period until the feedback from the consultation process has been assessed and the Aviation Stakeholder Consultation Feedback Report issued. The CONOPs and other TA documentation have been written on the assumption that an 18,000ft TA will be implemented during the European Commission's Regulatory Period 2 (RP2), which extends until the end of 2019.

Stakeholders are invited to:

- Read the on-line TA document set as described above;
- Review the list of [Commonly Asked Questions](#) if there is anything in the document set which is not clear to you; and,
- Provide responses to the [Questions for Industry Stakeholders](#), giving as much relevant information as possible to inform the State decision on a higher TA

- Stakeholders may respond to the consultation by any of the following methods:
 - Utilising the on-line survey tool on the TA Consultation webpage on the CAA website, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/transitionaltitude>.

This is the preferred method of responding. Stakeholders should note that documentation must be completed in one attempt as the on-line tool is not capable of saving data to enable a response to be completed later. It is therefore recommended that stakeholders read the questions and prepare answers in advance of filling in the on-line form.

- Sending an email to TAconsultation@caa.co.uk.
- Writing to: UK State TA Consultation, CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TE.

All responses must be received by the closing time and date of the consultation, 1600 on Wednesday 24th February 2016.

It should be noted the email account at: TAconsultation@caa.co.uk will only be available for the period of consultation.

3 FAB TA statement

The UK and Ireland Functional Airspace Block (FAB) has been pursuing the common goal of a harmonised TA for several years. The National Supervisory Authorities (NSAs) and the Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) of both countries, along with the MOD and the Irish Air Corps, have reached a consensus on how they would like to proceed and have therefore issued the following statement:

“This statement is agreed by the UK and Ireland NSAs that all parties will continue to co-operate fully on the development and implementation of a harmonised TA of 18,000ft at a date in the future.

The successful completion of a Concept of Operations (CONOPs) and underpinning safety work, considered necessary to address the technical issues associated with a harmonised TA of 18,000ft, means that both States are ready for consultation.

On the 23rd November 2015 consultations will commence in accordance with national and EU Legislation for SES Regulations.”

4 The European position

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) established a Harmonised European TA (HETA) Rulemaking Group, the aim of which was to determine which of the options under consideration for a raised TA at a European level was most appropriate. The HETA Group determined that there should be no EASA regulatory intervention. These findings have been presented to the European Commission and they will proceed to the Single European Skies (SES) Committee for ratification at their discretion.

The UK, Ireland and the Isle of Man have therefore announced their intent to implement a TA of 18,000ft at the same time and based on the same high level CONOPs. Norway has also indicated its intention to adopt a TA of 18,000ft although the timescales for consultation and implementation are yet to be confirmed. These changes will be implemented despite the fact that other neighbouring States have decided not to change their TAs at present. EASA and EUROCONTROL are both aware of these plans.