

Novel Operation in a Specific Trial Area (NOSTrA) Approach

Introduction

This document provides non-binding, good practice guidance to enable innovators to try out novel and innovative aviation technologies and operations in a sustainable manner, in UK airspace.

The CAA is increasingly being asked to support the deployment of new aviation technologies and operations, such as the development of dedicated drone routes or the deployment of novel air vehicles including cargo and passenger carrying drones over urban areas. The introduction of new technologies and operations may mean that impacts are felt by people who have not previously been affected by aviation or by people who will be subject to different impacts from those they are used to.

New impacts could include:

- Noise concentration around places where drone landings and take-offs take place;
- Noise or other environmental impacts for those overflown;
- Airspace sharing considerations for other airspace users;
- Privacy concerns resulting from low-level overflights and use of optical and other sensors; and
- Increased cyber security risks due to increased reliance on networked technologies.

New aviation technologies and operations are subject to safety regulation by the CAA. In most circumstances, few other permissions are required because in most cases novel operations do not require a formal change to airspace design, nor do they have the potential to affect existing aircraft traffic patterns. As a result, there is no current formal obligation to follow the usual processes for a change in airspace design, which include consideration of the impacts on other stakeholders¹.

In the CAA's experience, those affected by the manner in which airspace is used are less likely to oppose its use if they have had a real opportunity to air their views on the matter and those views have been listened to properly. Transparency about what the public can expect from a trial and why is key to its potential success. The CAA considers the successful public acceptance of these novel operations to constitute a form of 'social licence'², which is key to the sustainability and future scalability of these novel operations.

To support this the CAA has developed a new approach known as the Novel Operation in a Specific Trial Area (NOSTrA). NOSTrA is:

- An outcomes focused approach.
- Underpinned by core principles.
- Best practice to maximise public acceptance.

This is a new approach to novel operations and the CAA expects NOSTrA to develop over time with input from sponsors³ and the public.

In many cases the CAA is required to consider requests for permissions or exemptions to enable the requested aerial activities to take place. Those requests are independently considered by the appropriate CAA regulatory team and are separate from the good practice guidance of the NOSTrA approach.

- 1 Any potentially interested party in a proposed operation.
- 2 The ongoing acceptance of an innovation sponsor and operating procedures by its employees, stakeholders and the general public.
- 3 An organisation that proposes a novel or innovative operation within UK airspace.