

Safety and Airspace Regulation Group



All NATMAC Representatives

2nd October 2014

Dear Colleagues,

CAA DECISION LETTER

PROPOSED INTRODUCTION NEW UPPER AIR CONDITIONAL ROUTES OVER THE SOUTHERN NORTH SEA

NATS propose to implement two new conditional routes (CDRs) over the southern North Sea, introduced to help provide a more efficient network for both domestic and trans-Atlantic operations. These routes cross the UK Managed Danger Area EGD323 complex. Route designators and timings are detailed in the chart at Enclosure 1.

Currently, when any combination of the EGD323 complex is active, the flight-plans (FPL) of aircraft trying to follow Great Circle routes are deviated around the danger areas. When the danger areas are inactive (in any permutation of the five sub-areas), ATC provide tactical shortcuts across them, whereas most FPL combinations still have to route around them due to the relative lack of choice of route. As the fuel carried for that FPL route is often greater than that required to fly the tactical route, the two new CDRs will cross the EGD323 complex when closed, thereby resulting in improved route efficiency and flexibility when open. Routinely, these CDR1s will be available evening/nights, weekend and Bank Holidays and as a tactical CDR3 whenever the danger areas are deactivated at other times.

The MoD was consulted and has accepted the proposed change based on agreed operational criteria that ensure the routine or short notice operation of the danger area complex is not compromised. The flexible use of airspace (FUA) concept will help ensure that the most efficient use of airspace is realised and accommodates both airspace user groups' requirements. In addition, the NATS Operational Partnership Agreement (OPA) - which represents a broad cross section of commercial aircraft operators - supports airspace and route changes where the flight-plan distance is more closely aligned with actual distance flown to improve fuel planning.

It is clear that there is some benefit to be realised from introducing these new routes as the revised airspace will serve to provide a more flexible and efficient route structure. There is no safety concern arising from the proposed changes as the extant Airspace Management Cell UK coordination of CDRs through the EGD323 complex will be maintained.

Although the routes are wholly contained within controlled airspace and managed by Prestwick centre operations, as part of the routes are in High Seas airspace protocols dictate they be coordinated and accepted through an ICAO approval letter.

As liaison has been closely maintained with the MoD to satisfy military requirements and my staff has ensured that this airspace change meets with the requisite Regulatory Requirements and does not compromise the operation of other airspace users, I have decided to approve this Airspace Change Proposal. The changes will be implemented at AIRAC 13/2014 on 11 December 2014.

If you have any queries, the SARG Project Leader is Mac Mackay, who can be contacted on 020 7453 6552, mac.mackay@caa.co.uk



Mark Swan
Director

Enclosure:

1. North Sea SMDA Conditional Routes

