

All NATMAC Representatives
Environmental Consultees

24 September 2012

ERM/NATS-IAA IRISH SEA ACP Pt5

Dear Stakeholders,

CAA DECISION LETTER

PROPOSED LOWERING AND EXTENSION OF ATS ROUTE (U)L15 (Ex (U)L6) AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW LINK ROUTES (U)L28 AND (U)Q4.

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

- 1.1 On 11th February 2011, Information Notice IN-2011/08 provided details of a NATS and Directorate of Airspace Policy Framework Briefing on a proposal to introduce improvements to the Irish Sea airspace structure. The scope of the proposal was split into 5 largely separate sub-proposals in the same geographic area centred on the Isle of Man ATC Sector. Each sub-proposal has its own specific objectives. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the UK/Ireland Functional Airspace Block (FAB) principles. A FAB is an airspace block based on operational requirements and established regardless of State boundaries, where the provision of air navigation services and related functions are performance-driven and optimized with a view to introducing, in each functional airspace block, enhanced cooperation among air navigation service providers or, where appropriate, an integrated provider. The primary driver for this sub-proposal however, is to introduce an extended and lowered permanent airway and associated upper air route, (U)L15¹, formerly designated as L6, over the Irish Sea. This is part of a package of changes affecting the Irish Sea airspace. Additionally, new link routes will also be established to provide better en-route (airway) connectivity and to accommodate new RNAV² arrivals for Manchester and Liverpool airports. The new airspace structure is indicated by the yellow areas at Enclosure 1.

2. AIRSPACE EFFICIENCY

- 2.1 I am required to secure the most efficient use of airspace consistent with the safe operation of aircraft and the expeditious flow of air traffic. I am satisfied

¹ Airways are from their designated base (DB) up to FL245 (24,500 feet). Upper Air Routes are routes above FL245. When a route is indicated by a letter in parenthesis, it is referring to an airway and the corresponding Upper Air Route.

² Area Navigation (RNAV) is a method of Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) navigation that allows an aircraft to choose any course within a network of navigation beacons, rather than navigating directly to and from the beacons

that (U)L15 will provide additional en-route connections for Belfast departures to the southeast, above Flight Level (FL)145 (approx 14500 feet), and will also be able to accommodate certain transatlantic overflights which are likewise positioned south on the existing (U)L10. (U)L15 will also help address the complexity of the existing airspace structure by increasing flexibility. L15 will now start at DUFFY in the Belfast Terminal Manoeuvring Area (TMA) and will then route via PEPOD to MALUD, where it will join the existing (U)L6, which will also be redesignated (U)L15. The base level of the airway south of MALUD will be lowered from FL185 down to FL145 to reflect the base level of the route north of MALUD. By extending the route in the Belfast TMA and introducing the extended L603 from the IOM, NATS is able to introduce a more effective route structure that removes existing Directs (DCT), which is in accord with the European Network Management Route Availability Document requirements to reduce the number of DCTs. The more efficient route structure will help reduce controller workload with fewer tactical instructions being required. L15 will be a Class D airway as it passes through the Strangford Control Area (CTA), and then Class A from MAKUX to MALUD.

- 2.2 The introduction of link routes (U)L28 and (U)Q4 will serve to facilitate the introduction of the new RNAV STARs to Manchester and Liverpool. Aircraft inbound to Liverpool will leave (U)L15 at SOSIM, join (U)L28 and then route via PENIL. Manchester traffic will continue on (U)L15 to GIGTO, join (U)Q4 and then route via Wallasey. Although State policy requires all participating en-route traffic to be RNAV equipped, non-RNAV aircraft requesting to join the respective Manchester and Liverpool STARs will fly the existing procedures.
- 2.3 Traffic flows across the Irish Sea have to integrate with the existing air traffic management (ATM) system. In particular, integration with the iFACTS³ ATM system implemented for the London Area Control Swanwick (SWN) Sectors above FL285 is required. This is achieved by iFACTS simply using the new route and fixes (points) in the same way it does with every other route or fix. This enables a reduction in tactical vectoring⁴ being required as aircraft can be placed on their own navigation. I am satisfied that this advance in conflict detection delivers a safety benefit..

3. AIRSPACE USERS

- 3.1 I am required to satisfy the requirements of operators and owners of all classes of aircraft. NATS undertook a comprehensive consultation with all affected stakeholder groups. The British Gliding Association (BGA) objected to lowering of L15 to FL145 in the Mold (AMPIT) area as it would affect their high level gliding operations. However, I am satisfied that as there is a clear operational benefit to the additional airspace being introduced, a modified letter of agreement that will enable the BGA members to operate under certain Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) arrangements, will accommodate both NATS and BGA requirements without disadvantaging any other airspace users. The MoD has indicated that it has no objections to any airspace development that is part of this sub-proposal.

³ Interim Future Area Control Tools Support

⁴ Vectoring is the application of headings having to be given by a radar controller

4. INTERESTS OF OTHER PARTIES

- 4.1 I am also required to take account of the interests of any other person (other than an operator or owner of an aircraft) in relation to the use of any particular airspace or the use of airspace generally. Although most of the revised route structure is wholly contained over the Irish Sea, L15 will now overfly the Clwydian Range lower than it does at present, but above FL145. I am satisfied that NATS has satisfactorily explained that the route will only be used on an occasional basis by an estimated 10 additional flights per day.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 I have considered the environmental impact of air operations and it is reasonable to conclude that there is a broadly neutral environmental impact as a result of the changes associated with this proposal. The unquantified impact of a reduction in fuel uplift is likely to be so small as to be insignificant in considering this sub-proposal. They added that although L15 will overfly the Clywdian Range AONB at a lower flight level than before, the area is already overflown to some extent by aircraft below FL145.

6. SAFETY

- 6.1 As my primary duty is to maintain a high degree of safety in the provision of air traffic services, my staff, together with colleagues from the Safety Regulation Group of the CAA have confirmed that the proposed airspace design and associated management arrangements can be safely adopted. The appropriate safety management processes resulting from this airspace change will be completed prior to the introduction of any operational change and thus safety levels will be maintained.

7. NATIONAL SECURITY

- 7.1 I am satisfied that national security will not be impacted by this proposal and the specific consultation requirements with the Secretary of State for Defence have been discharged by correspondence with the MoD who has confirmed it is content with the proposal.

8. REGULATORY DECISION

- 8.1 I am satisfied that the new airspace arrangements will help provide a more efficient route structure that will provide increased flexibility and help reduce controller workload. The additional routes will also provide considerably greater connectivity and will reduce the number of DCTs, in line with the flight-planning requirements of the European Network Management RAD. The advancement in global navigation systems will be reflected by the introduction of more RNAV routes and procedures that can work independently of the ground navigational infrastructure. These route changes have been introduced as part of the further development of the UK/Ireland FAB and will not necessarily disadvantage other airspace users. I am also satisfied that the single option put forward in the consultation was the only viable option, as the do nothing option would not have realised any operational benefits.
- 8.2 I have therefore decided to approve the lowering and extension of this ATS route and the introduction of the link routes on the grounds they provide increased flexibility and a more efficient route structure. The changes also satisfy the operational requirements of the PC sectorisation and potential

integration with Swanwick Sectors' traffic requirements, whilst accommodating the needs of other airspace users. The revised airspace will become effective from 13 December 2012. My staff will review the effectiveness of the arrangements not before 12 months after introduction and the results of this review will be published.

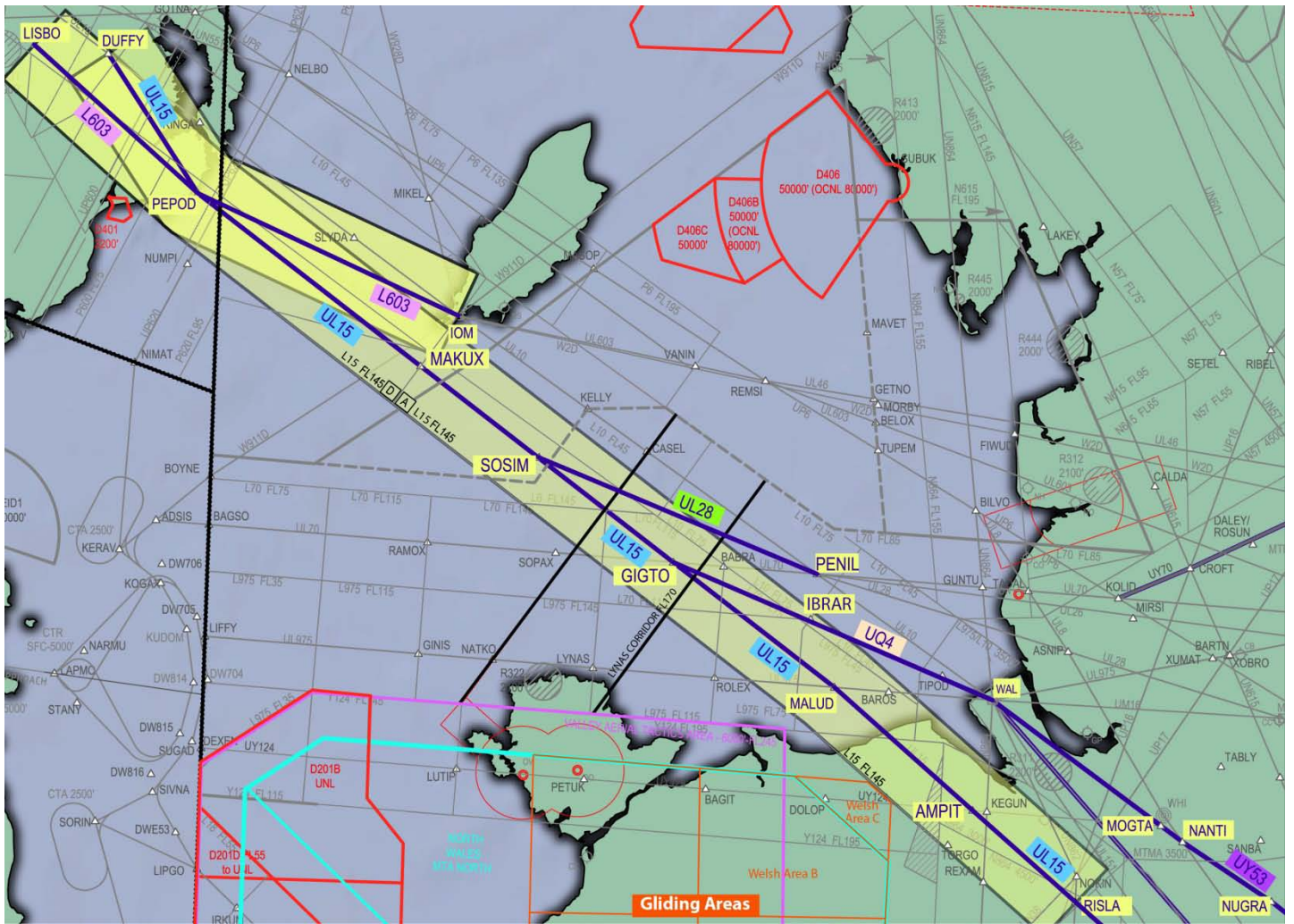
- 8.3 If you have any queries, the DAP Project Leaders are Mac Mackay and Clive Grant, who can be contacted on 020 7453 6552/6551, mac.mackay@caa.co.uk or clive.grant@caa.co.uk

Yours sincerely,

Mark Swan

Mark Swan
Director

Enclosure: 1. Extension and Lowering of (U)L15 and Introduction of Associated Link Routes (U)L28 & (U)Q4



Extension and Lowering of (U)L15 and Introduction of Associated Link Routes (U)L28 & (U)Q4