

Drone Leadership Group Minutes

Chairperson	Karl Simpson
Date/Time	Thursday, 13 May 2021 10.00am-11.30am
Location	Ministry of Transport 3 Queens Wharf, Wellington, 6011 (opposite TSB Arena) and via Skype
Invited participants	Peter Crabtree (MBIE) Joe McKay (MBIE) John Kay (CAA) Dean Winter (CAA) Katie Bhreatnach (Airways) Mark Blanchard (Airways) Kirstie Hewlett (MoT) Karl Simpson (MoT) Note, other staff from the respective member agencies will also be in attendance

1. Introductions/apologies

Karl Simpson introduced himself as replacement of Kirstie Hewlett, who is going to leave the Ministry to take up the role of Director at Maritime New Zealand. Karl was the chairperson as Kirstie was an apology. Dean Winter was also an apology. It was announced that as from June, David Harrison will replace Dean Winter during the group meetings.

2. Update on Enabling Drone Integration, upcoming decisions, and resource implications

The Ministry provided an update on the progress of the consultation process on the discussion document on Enabling Drone Integration. Road shows have been taking place in Wellington, Auckland, Christchurch and Queenstown and both the public events and the meetings with stakeholders are going well. In general, there is overall support for the proposed regulatory package and stakeholders have appreciated the opportunity to engage directly with the Ministry and CAA officials. A recurrent topic of discussion is the need for more testing and trialling sites, and for a clear transition pathway from testing and trialling into a real-life environment. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, next steps will be to develop policy further regarding how to implement proposed regulatory measures and to provide final policy recommendations to the Minister and Cabinet towards the end of the year. Implementation will be very challenging without additional resources.

The CAA noted that there is some general confusion among stakeholders about the term 'integration' and its exact meaning. A roadmap could be created to show the proposed timeframes and targets for all ongoing work and its progress.

MBIE emphasised that the sector needs to be provided with some confidence around integration of drones. The majority of the feedback stresses that people want to see signals that give confidence on progress. Other jurisdictions do this more often and in a better way than New Zealand.

Airways highlighted that if regulatory solutions are too slow, that commercial interests in the use of airspace may develop in that regulatory vacuum.

3. Update on Aerospace Sector Strategy, upcoming decisions, and resource implications

MBIE provided an update on the Aerospace Strategy workshop in Christchurch from two weeks ago, where many national stakeholders (with different perspectives) were attending. The workshop gave attendees the opportunity to express themselves, but did not necessarily lead to specific proposals for the content of the strategy. There will be another workshop in Auckland soon. The aim is to prepare a draft strategy within a month, on which both the Ministry and CAA can provide input.

The Ministry acknowledged MBIE's hard work on the strategy, and noted that its main concern at this point is ensuring that there are enough resources across the system to deliver on it. [REDACTED]

Airways noted that it is planning to review its commercial framework, which involves their current service and pricing framework. Their current service framework excludes AirShare, as this is treated as part of their international business. Additionally, Airways noted that it is not investing as much in R&D as it was planning prior to COVID-19 due to limited resources.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. Discussion on future governance arrangements on drones and aerospace

The Ministry asked whether the group was happy with the existing governance arrangements for work on drones across different agencies. The group agreed that the leadership group was working effectively, so no changes are needed at this stage. They discussed the possibility of changing the name of the leadership group but agreed this could be considered further outside of the meeting.

6. Roundtable updates

Airways invited all agencies to attend their National Customer Liaison meeting with stakeholders in June. This could be an opportunity to send out any messages around integration.

7. Any other Business

No other points were raised.