

Drone Leadership Group Minutes

Chairperson	Richard Cross acting on behalf of Kirstie Hewlett
Date/Time	Thursday, 20 August 2020 9.00-10:30am
Location	Ministry of Transport 3 Queens Wharf, Wellington, 6011 (opposite TSB Arena).
Invited participants	Peter Crabtree (MBIE) John Kay (CAA) Dean Winter (CAA) Katie Bhreatnach (Airways) Mark Blanchard (Airways) Kirstie Hewlett (MoT) Note, other staff from the respective member agencies may also be in attendance

1. Apologies

Kirstie, John, Peter, Katie and Dean sent their apologies. Delegates from the CAA, MBIE and Ministry of Transport stood in for the absent Drone Leadership Group members.

2. Roundtable of updates

The group introduced themselves to Mark from Airways

The Ministry provided an update on its work. It noted the impact COVID-19 has had on its work programme and that some pieces of work have been delayed. In particular, engagement activities with stakeholders has been compromised due to the difficulty in scheduling and planning ahead. The Ministry also gave an update on the Drone Forum which is now going to be an online event due to the lockdown restrictions. The Forum will be about the Colmar Brunton drone survey. The Forum will incorporate responses to feedback from the sector on the survey results and an update from Drone Leadership Group member agencies on how the findings from the survey will be incorporated into their work. The Ministry also talked about its work on UTM and noted that there has been a delay in the work due to a shift in priorities. The work is planned to continue shortly and focus on the foundational aspects of UTM e.g. what it is, why we need one and what we need to think about when considering it as an option to help integrate drones into the aviation system. The Ministry also provided an update on its security work which is a major part of the Civil Aviation Bill. It noted that work was business as usual and that it is currently reviewing its timelines based on the change in the election date.

The CAA provided an update on its work programme including its recruitment process. It is also heavily engaged in the Ministry's regulatory work and continues to work through applications for part 102 certificates.

MBIE gave an update on its AITP programme. It is continuing to support Wisk on its certification pathway and is progressing memorandums of understanding with two other potential agency partners. It is also engaging with a number of other potential industry partners and continues to connect with domestic and international advanced aviation companies.

Airways noted that Tim Fletcher is no longer with Airways and that any support on future drone work should be directed to Katie Bhreatnach or Mark Blanchard.

3. Update on the drone regulatory work programme (content and timeframe for consultation)?

The Ministry provided an update on its regulatory work programme and noted the progress on its consultation document. The document covers a series of potential regulatory changes. It noted that the document will be quite detailed and be used to engage with the sector on potential changes to the drone regulatory regime that will occur over time.

The consultation document aims to incorporate an overview of what the Government is doing in the drone space. It will talk about the cross agency approach to drone integration and some high-level discussion on the testing and trialling work MBIE is leading, UTM and Airshare. It will look at both the opportunities and challenges of integrating drones into New Zealand. The paper will highlight a number of potential options for the Government to pursue to enable drone integration in our aviation system and wider transport system.

There has been a further delay (a month) on the timeline of this work due to the change in election date. This is likely to delay stakeholder engagement. The intention is still to begin the engagement process at the end of this calendar year or early next year.

4. Further development of the Airspace Integration Trial Programme (AITP)

MBIE talked about the potential for further development of the AITP. Before it did that it gave an update on its risk register and in particular risks with:

- capability and capacity of the various agencies to support the programme and drone integration in New Zealand
- New Zealand not being the preferred country of choice for R&D in the development, testing and certification of the drones sector.

It noted that it is considering a number of treatments to mitigate these risks.

The group noted that there continued to be strong demand from companies wanting to test and develop drones in New Zealand, and that there was potential to scale up the AITP over time. However, this would be challenging while there is still a backlog of Part 102 applications. The group agreed that a separate meeting should be held to discuss different options that could be explored to ensure that we are in a position to expand the programme in the future, if there continues to be strong demand for it.

5. Collective approach to engaging with international bodies and jurisdictions

This item was deferred for next meeting. The Ministry and CAA will undertake some preliminary work to inform a more detailed discussion around our international engagement priorities at the next meeting.

6. Any other Business

There was no other business raised.