

ACOG SC AWAYDAY 25th SEP 24 – SUMMARY

The ACOG Steering Committee (SC) convened in the Royal Air Force Club premises in London on Wed 25th September. The SC considered the following subject areas:

- Under Actions Arising, the topic of NERL simulator capacity versus demand was discussed again. The MTMA assurance sims had gone well and good practice had been identified to carry forward into subsequent clusters. It was observed that the core technology was not a constraint, but rather capacity and there is a clear need for careful planning and sequencing to ensure that all simulation demands across a variety of key projects are met. The Chair determined that the topic was of strategic importance and he foresaw that the UKADS would no doubt seek assurances that the capability, capacity and planning could accommodate the new entity's needs. The action should remain open until a suitable opportunity for handover to UKADS presented itself.
- Learning from experience with the ScTMA, ACOG had assembled and distributed good practice guides. The Chair asked how the ScTMA example would have been different under the new guides and it was confirmed that invalid parameters introduced by a sponsor would be identified earlier.
- Hd of ACOG reported that CAA had confirmed that 35 additional heads had been recruited for the Authority's airspace team and that they were on track to clear the ACP backlog. It was decided to review the position again in six months.
- ACOG delivered update reports for all clusters. The Chair asked if ACOG were yet in a position to identify the core FASI programme, to help with ensuring limited resources were focussed appropriately. ACOG responded that work was ongoing to streamline the programme and avoid any unnecessary friction in each cluster. The Chair asked if it may be now time to create an airgap between the LTMA that would come under UKADS' wing and focus ACOG resources on the remaining clusters to drive delivery in them, particularly ScTMA and MTMA. It was agreed that until there was greater clarity on the UKADS' scope and timeline, ACOG's work at least at a care and maintenance level should continue in the LTMA.
- The SC considered a range of options examining how best ACOG may configure to best complement the UKADS, acknowledging that none of them could be considered firm until the nature of the UKADS and its role was better defined. All options had been informed by three principles: maintaining momentum to avoid the programme stalling while UKADS was awaiting mobilisation; ACOG would complement the UKADS, not compete; and in the interim to continue to work and apply ACOG's expertise to derisk the LTMA. ACOG's view was that a key contribution to maintaining programme momentum was investment in the Design Visual Repository tool, which could also help in derisking future work in the LTMA.
- ACOG reiterated that the sequential 'cluster' approach had been specifically designed, and endorsed by the Authority, to enable the managed application of finite stakeholder resources, such as industry consultants, NERL simulation and technical design expertise, regulator bandwidth, training capacity and AIRAC cycles. If balanced momentum was not maintained across the sequence of clusters, programme compression would inevitably result, putting the overall programme schedule and timely delivery of key modernisation objectives at high risk. At this

stage, ScTMA was the core planning activity and the majority of resources were being focussed there to drive success, including in developing a strategy for combined consultations. The Chair highlighted the critical need to maintain momentum to avoid further programme compression and observed that it was perhaps not illuminated clearly enough in the paper. Collectively, various localised performance failures and wider process flaws, exacerbated by unwelcome uncertainty surrounding the enablers, hazy boundaries and protracted development of the UKADS initiative over the preceding 12 months, had escalated the risk of programme compression to an issue that probably now needed to be managed actively.

- The Chair asked if ACOG had a feel for when ACOG and UKADS would begin working in parallel and whether any risks were evident in drawing on limited pools of resource simultaneously, as he felt the SC would want to understand better the likelihood and impact of compression and resource contention. Hd of ACOG responded that the Chair's question was difficult to answer as definition of the UKADS' role and scope were still unclear. It was explained that the multiple LTMA sponsors' internal teams were already 'in the detail' with their external consultants. The known unknown was whether the current stages the airports were at would be honoured when the UKADS was mobilised, or if work would need to restart. It was agreed that the Chair's question should be noted but was not able to be answered at this stage. It was reiterated that concurrent implementation of major design changes was not possible as systems had to be adapted, reprogrammed, assured and training conducted and there is finite capacity to do so. The Chair acknowledged the points and observed that determining the LTMA deployment strategy early would be on the critical path for UKADS.
- The SC commented that, regardless of any temporary disruption arising from the introduction of the UKADS into the mix, the current FASI programme timeline was proving optimistic, and potentially unrealistic, and would in all probability need to be adapted. The turbulence arising from sponsors' poor progress through CAP1616 gateways, likely as a result of a combination of both process and application shortcomings, and the disruption the open question over support funding was causing, meant that there was now little-to-no contingency.
- The SC highlighted a risk of ACOG having two different scopes in the interim, working on the ScTMA and the MTMA with full scope of activity but additional scope to support UKADS for LTMA. There was a complexity with this. Hd of ACOG reported that ACOG were paying a lot of attention to their relationship with NERL as they were working on the assumption NERL would be the body that would host the UKADS. As the UKADS was primarily a design function, but all other wrap around work such as CAF and consultations had to be completed, ACOG may be seen as an additional wrapper around the UKADS that would need maintaining in the LTMA. The Chair opined the phrase 'wrapper around the UKADS' could cause friction due to potential connotations of control and asked for the opinion of the SC. It was remarked that ACOG do not undertake delivery of design and if the UKADS' sole purpose was for design, there should be no problem. The SC felt that the programme needed to be delivered and ACOG's work was still required. The issue was how elements would be delivered in the quickest and most efficient way.

- The SC felt that informing the UKADS consultation process with a realistic timeline would be essential and the energy in the SC should be directed at building the adaptation process. The Chair added that ACOG's function for ScTMA and MTMA was more clearly defined, but the function of the UKADS was less clearly articulated at this stage and may be design or something more. The SC observed that at this stage there was a broad idea of what the tasks of the UKADS were, but it was agreed there was no clarity over how they would be discharged and by whom.
- The SC were joined by Ian Elston from DfT and received a presentation on the VOLANS DVR project that ACOG had initiated. Hd of ACOG highlighted that ACOG's function was to assure that trade-offs had been correctly managed and the CAF correctly applied. The DVR tool offered high potential in supporting ACOG's function of ensuring the public had a transparent view of how decisions had been made. This was not a design tool. The tool did not have to become public facing, and the sponsors will have a choice of whether to use it in the consultation materials or not. The SC asked whether and how the CAA would use the tool to support decision making, as buy-in would be needed to input the data to start with. Hd of ACOG confirmed the CAA had been shown the potential of the tool, including how the FAA used it, and there was genuine interest. The tool's aim was to aid facilitation of design visualisation and audit. IE opined that 'people on the ground' would find this useful and identified the potential to include education for those who will hear aviation noise from an aircraft that was not physically going over their house. It could also be beneficial to show the current flight paths, which would show that a route already exists over their property, therefore illustrating a design change would not cause significant change. The Chair summarised that there appeared to be potential for the tool to add considerable value in ACOG's coordination and facilitation role and that there were useful development options if the tool did become public facing, noting some of the cautions expressed by colleagues. He welcomed the team's success in attracting significant AMS support funding and looked forward to further updates on the tool's development and utility. IE left the meeting after lunch.
- The Chair summarised a conversation had over lunch with IE and SC colleagues. DfT's new Ministers were reported to be positive about airspace change and the Aviation Minister wanted to drive change forward. How this translated remained unknown. In relation to FASI support funding, IE understood the impact the lack of clarity and a process were having on the FASI programme. He expected to publish a proposal for support for non-LTMA airport sponsors next year and aims to have something in place by the end of June 2025. The concept for the UKADS included a funding mechanism for the LTMA. IE was open to ideas on earlier funding solutions including undertaking activities at risk. The Chair stated that an internal conversation was therefore needed urgently to try and ensure funding was available for qualifying cases before June 2025, as that date was too late and put the integrity of the FASI programme in jeopardy. On the UKADS, IE reported that approval from Ministers to go to consultation had been received. An 8-week consultation would be launched by the end of October. Following analysis of the consultation responses and any adjustments to the proposal required, a decision on the way ahead for UKADS was expected by the end of Q1 2025, with a mobilisation period and the ADS operational by the beginning of Q3 of 2025. The Chair emphasised for IE that anything that

disturbed or unbalanced the in-play ScTMA and MTMA modernisation activities could have a domino effect on the LTMA with critical resources contention and conflict. There was a need to have a conversation around scheduling to avoid intra-cluster 'fratricide'.

- The Chair felt there was an implied task on ACOG to produce data/evidence e.g. Gantt chart on ScTMA and MTMA projects schedule, indicating key delivery points and any overlap in calls on critical resources. This analysis could usefully include an indication of interrelationships with currently assumed LTMA timescales, noting that the arrival of the UKADS may lead to a revised project plan for that cluster. There was a need to examine resource capacity to identify choke points and parallel requirements. The SC also suggested that ACOG should formally ask NERL for both technical design and simulator assurance resource capacity up to and beyond UKADS initial operating capability. Hd of ACOG reminded the SC that the risk was already on the strategic risk register and undertook to engage with NERL as recommended.
- The SC asked if there had been an impact on the airspace consulting market thus far from the announcement of the intention to create the UKADS. Hd of ACOG reported that there was only anecdotal evidence at this stage but that he presumed a Regulatory Impact Assessment would be a requirement on the CAA following the consultation.
- The Chair sought SC colleagues' views on where and how ACOG and the SC could best inform the development of UKADS thinking, particularly given the identified risks of further destabilising the programme and thereby snatching defeat from the jaws of some of the earlier likely victories. A conversation was had around whether separate or combined ACOG and SC responses to the UKADS and subsequent support funding consultations would be most appropriate. It was agreed that those SC colleagues who wanted to respond individually would do so. It was also agreed that ACOG would draft their response to the consultation within 4 weeks and circulate to the SC before submission. In summary, the Chair emphasised that ACOG must not to be perceived as preparing to compete with the UKADS. ACOG's posture thus far, preparing to complement the UKADS' forthcoming activities in the LTMA with a clear focus on delivery of the key modernisation objectives in the remaining clusters remained appropriate.
- ACOG provided an update on their comms and engagement activities post the General Election. ACOG's positioning with the new Government would include elevating the importance of airspace modernisation, the potential to unlock growth at minimal expense and presenting airspace modernisation as a piece of the integrated transport network puzzle. The aim was to position ACOG as a solutions-oriented body that could assist the Government unblock a bottleneck and emphasise the impartiality of ACOG, which was integral to airport consultations. The SC felt that there was a need to make the new Government aware of the critical role that ACOG had and the added value that had been delivered thus far by ACOG.
- Concluding the day's activities, the Chair reiterated that although the details of the UKADS remained unknown, ACOG's aim should be to work towards achieving a sufficient level of clarity with regard to the current programme critical path and risks to enable informed and constructive contributions to the forthcoming consultations.