

ACOG SC 29th OCT 25 – SUMMARY

The ACOG Steering Committee (SC) convened in the RAF Club in London on Wed 29th October. The principal aims of the meeting were for the SC to review two ACOG objectives – progressing the ACOG FASI clusters as expeditiously as possible to levels of maturity and stability as UKADS/UKACS take shape, and the smooth transition of ACOG into UKACS. The SC considered the following subject areas:

- Transition of governance arrangements for ACOG/UKACS was discussed and the need to engage with stakeholders to avoid any conflicts was agreed. Close dialogue would be maintained with NERL and the Co-Sponsors. Understandably, NERL's priority would be to confirm the regulatory and oversight framework in which UKADS/UKACS would operate and a separate Advisory Board would be stood up in due course.
- ACOG reported that the MTMA design would need a re-sim in 2026 and the capacity of NERL to undertake this was currently unknown. A fully scoped plan of resource vs capacity vs timeline was still required, so this would remain a risk. There had been positive short-term actions, but long-term solutions remained work in progress. The Chair observed the risk had been identified over five years ago but acknowledged that it had previously lacked the granularity now available, with the pinch points now clearer. Any plans proposed for the next 18-36 month with committed dates would need to be realistic. ACOG explained that a re-sim was required as there was redesign work ongoing due to the Liverpool/Manchester interactions, and the low-level GA corridor, since the August 24 sim. A known unknown was Doncaster; their ACP would need accommodating in some form or other and some further redesign work may be needed. The SC sought to explore the credibility of the timelines being defined for the MTMA and emphasised the need to continually critically appraise these to allow understanding of the level of confidence attached to the plans. The Chair's opening statement in ACOG's recent Annual Report was referenced and the Chair confirmed he had since written to the new Aviation Minister highlighting the importance of not squandering the opportunity to deliver the MTMA this decade.
- The SC reviewed selected programme risks relating to 'Consultation' and 'Instrument Flight Procedure' design resource. ACOG are awaiting a response on the IFP resource paper they had submitted to the Co-Sponsors. The Chair asked whether the risk severity had changed following the positive updates from the CAA on their recruitment strategy. The CAA had outsourced some IFP requirements and were confident they could manage the IFP risk for MTMA. However, ACOG confirmed that the overall risk would stay critical until the IFP paper response had been received as they were not confident there had been enough action to mitigate the risk. The SC highlighted that the industry had raised this with the CAA for some time and drew attention to the severity of the impact on the LTMA if this risk was not resolved. The Chair added any lack of capacity would reverberate in MTMA and ScTMA. ACOG would continue to provide briefings and reports to the Co-Sponsors in an effort to ensure the risk is mitigated satisfactorily.
- The ScTMA consultation had launched on 20th October. Positive feedback had been received in the local and national media. ACOG, NERL and the airports were all aligned on messaging following years of engagement and preparation. The ScTMA

Airports had chosen to manage their own system-based websites and consultation documents; ACOG had encouraged a joint landing page to allow ease of use for the public. ACOG reported that the CAA were currently not planning to maintain the Benefits Strategy within the "residual functions" in UKACS. The SC felt it would be unwise to ignore definition and tracking of benefits arising from the modernisation programme. A discussion was had around maintaining momentum with the SC highlighting the challenges inherent in keeping the clusters moving during the transition phase to the new UKADS and UKACS entities. There was agreement that there were opportunities to apply lessons learned from the ScTMA consultation to other clusters in the future. The SC emphasised the need to explicitly record the considerable background work that ACOG had completed for this consultation to ensure UKACS continued to plan for success in future clusters. A short video demonstrating a Design Visual Repository (DVR) representation of the Edinburgh options was presented; feedback had been received from the ScTMA consultation around the need for a 'wider picture'. ACOG's DVR tool could address this in the future for other clusters.

- The SC discussed how best to plan for the transition from the ACOG to UKACS 'brands' to ensure key elements of ACOG's profile are not lost. There was acknowledgement that the impact of the change would likely be closely scrutinised by some stakeholders. ACOG had previously successfully maintained a level of separation from NERL, but the lines would presumably blur, so there was a need to avoid raising doubts about any loss of impartiality during this pivotal point of the programme. Notwithstanding, the Chair highlighted that the CAA had already declared explicitly that there will be no need for UKACS to be an independent unit within NERL.
- The SC discussed the latest understanding in terms of UKADS' scope and timelines for implementation. It was noted that Ministers remained committed to UKADS standing up by the end of 2025, but there was as yet little further detail. In the meantime, it would be important for ACOG to forge ahead with facilitating modernisation plans in the non-LTMA clusters. ACOG reported positive news on securing agreement on a funding model for the ScTMA initially, with the expectation that this would apply to the MTMA and WTMA in due course. A complete synopsis of the legacy LTMA ACPs had been captured and collated within the DVR and this was available for NERL to use if required, although it was anticipated that NERL may wish to adopt a top-down design approach.
- The SC received a progress report on the ACOG FASI clusters. Following two failed attempts by Leeds to pass their ACP's Stage 2 Gateway, new consultants had been contracted to support their latest submission with close support from ACOG. A planned January gateway submission was awaiting confirmation (bought forward from April). Other ways to streamline and buy back time were being investigated, including the use of NERL Part Task Trainers for some of the design and sim work. ACOG had reduced the risk of failing gateways by increasing standardisation among ACPs, especially data provision and providing expert advice to sponsors on request. ACOG proposed removing LTMA and LAS from the ACOG Dashboard following

direction from the Co-Sponsors to cease reporting on those elements. The SC agreed. Notwithstanding the CAA's decision to terminate the LAS ACP, LAS' ACP would in fact be paused and not removed from the portal. Bristol had a Dev SIM arranged in December, with a DCO application for a runway extension in progress. ACOG have advised the airport to model two options, with or without the DCO.

- The SC considered a paper on options for progressing the MTMA cluster during the transition to UKACS. The Co-Sponsors have declared the LTMA to be UKADS' top priority. However, it appears that NERL holds the view that for the best chance of success, UKADS may also be the best delivery vehicle for the MTMA, leveraging the revised regulatory framework that it is anticipated UKADS will work to. Nevertheless, this would need further consideration once the revised regulatory processes and policies have been confirmed. There would need to be alignment at some point on the options. In principle the CAA had not demurred from supporting ACOG to continue work with a potential switch to the revised CAP1616 process at a later date. It was suggested that the airports would be keen to continue to progress and avoid any waste of time and resources. The Chair opined ACOG should provide some checks and balance to ensure decisions were not made solely based on high-level Gantt charts. There was a need to understand evidence-based differences between following a legacy CAP1616 approach in the MTMA, a hybrid approach, or a UKADS approach, to be able to ensure that decision makers were provided with the facts. ACOG were working to understand which of the three approaches would provide the optimum course of action. The SC sought clarity on what would be fundamentally different from the legacy approach at this point and what, if any, risk attached to proceeding as originally planned at this stage. It was perceived that the risk was in diverging from ACOG's current plan on the assumption that a yet-to-be-defined regulatory framework would make up for lost time, and then failing to meet the potential MTMA deployment window later in this decade, with the consequence it would then not be possible to modernise the MTMA until the latter half of the next decade given NERL and the Co-Sponsors' other priorities in the interim. ACOG hold a more conservative view of what the new CAP1616 process will enable in practice, given that initial indications are that the consultation process is unlikely to be diluted significantly. Thus, there are still several unknowns to be resolved. The SC commented on the Co-Sponsors' likely priorities and highlighted the risk of stakeholders interpreting them as a delivery sequence, rather than priorities for resource allocation.
- ACOG tabled a paper to prompt discussion on how best to navigate the transition to UKACS. ACOG were attempting to engage with NERL on UKACS, but it was clear this was in its infancy. The uncertainty around UKACS at this early stage created a people challenge within ACOG; ACOG management were keen to seek assurances as soon as practicable from the NATS Executive to avoid losing ACOG staff, acknowledging it was currently not top of NERL's priority list. It was noted that there is a legacy of value from ACOG that should be transferred. The SC highlighted a need to have an inventory of what key assets would need to be secured in the transition, to avoid loss of momentum in the non-LTMA clusters and of corporate memory. The SC suggested

it would be important to ensure there is shared situational awareness amongst the key stakeholders and recommended highlighting the key issues in ACOG's UKACS consultation response. It was important that CAA, DfT and industry knew what ACOG considered necessary for transition. The umbrella term 'residual tasks' had been used by the Co-Sponsors, but the SC considered it essential that ACOG informs the definition of these as the subject matter experts.