



Airspace Update

January 2005

by

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Chairman, BGA Airspace Committee

SCOTLAND

The Scottish change proposal has been finalised and generally is very beneficial for gliding, with airway bases raised by up to 4,000ft in the Aboyne/Portmoak area and Carlisle area. These changes come into effect on February 17, 2005.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is changing their airspace to Class D, from Class E, but they have reduced the area and further arrangements are being developed to enable gliders to cross their zone.

ENGLAND & WALES

Newcastle

Newcastle has been granted Class D airspace to join the new airway to Manchester but Bruce Cooper and I had two flying visits and basically they agreed to our suggestions. They have a good record of co-operation with General Aviation and really only got the airspace and bases that they did need.

East Midlands

East Midlands has delayed the introduction of their new more extensive Class D airspace that will affect Husbands Bosworth in particular. Their ATC manager, Jon Cox, is very helpful. Good agreements for the Junior Worlds together with the Manager at Birmingham, John Williamson.

Finningley

Finningley, now known as Robin Hood Airport, has been granted an ATZ and is due to commence operations on a small scale in January 2005. Richard Cole, recently retired Squadron Leader RAF, is to visit when the new ATC Manager arrives very soon to give a presentation on gliding, when, where, how high, etc. All the local clubs have been asked to be present and show where their gliders regularly operate.

West End

Bristol and Cardiff have been involved as part of the West End development of total redesign of airspace west of London to Ireland. We have been very involved for three years and meetings to ensure glider access through the Bath gap will, I am sure, be successful. Andy Davis is also involved. Access to wave flying areas that will become controlled airspace in 2006 has been agreed.

Birmingham

Widening of the airway at levels above FL145 will not concern gliding but they also want to extend low-level airspace towards Bidford. The Ministry of Defence and the BGA are objecting.

Coventry

Farnborough and Manston are applying for Class D airspace but none had started the informal consultation process at the time of writing.

Luton

A proposal for further Class D airspace to allow arrivals from the north when they are operating on 08 has been on the go for some while but it was only at the eleventh hour that they consulted the BGA and NATS at the same time.

Kenley

The site is experiencing a serious number of low flying general aviation aircraft when they are gliding and the Safety Regulation Group is meeting at Kenley with the Civil and Military CFIs and myself to discuss the problem.

PARACHUTING

Bruce and I are concerned that some parachute sites shown on the map are not operating at all or very irregularly and so causing General Aviation to fly around them due to the current 'rules'. If there is no reply on the given frequency then a pilot must assume that they are active.

AIS and Royal Flight Notams are still very user-unfriendly and meetings are planned with the Royal Flight department and AIS.

PRESENTATIONS

Hugh Woodsend, Aston Down, is giving excellent gliding presentations around the country to RAF units, where it is compulsory to attend. These presentations are being very well received and the senior officers realise the benefits of this education. Perhaps we should invite talks by RAF pilots on their operations?

MODE S TRANSPONDERS

The reason for the development of a Mode S transponder is that in Europe and some other very busy commercial flight operational areas the number of Transponder Codes has virtually run out. There are times when an aircraft is delayed on take-off solely due to not having a transponder code available for ATC to read after take-off. With Mode S this problem will go away as there will be literally millions of codes available. Today there are 999 codes.

There are two different types of Mode S transponders that are being mandated and introduced for flights in controlled airspace where the carriage of a transponder is mandatory. Currently in UK it is mandatory above FL100 in controlled airspace.

EHS – Enhanced Surveillance Mode S

This is being mandated for all aircraft above 5,700kg and speed of 250kt and above.

This is basically for all commercial operators and already some operators are wishing to delay this implementation due to economic considerations. Whilst most operators will be equipped by March 31, 2007 there will be transition arrangements for aircraft operators to equip the remaining 10 per cent of an EHS applicable fleet.

EHS allows ATC to download the aircraft's speed, height, heading, and so on to, in effect, see the aircraft's flight path ahead of the aircraft.

ELS– Elementary Surveillance Mode S

This is the type of transponder that will replace the current Mode A/C transponders. This transponder will transmit the aircraft's altitude and its identification. In theory all aircraft will be required to carry an Elementary Mode S transponder from March 31, 2008 in airspace that is mandated for the carriage of a transponder. NB: this may not apply to the open FIR.

At present there is no transponder available for unpowered aircraft that could be switched on continuously, without flattening our glider batteries within a couple of hours.

Current transponders transmit 70-150 Watts, which is the ICAO standard. The UK has developed a low-power, 20-Watt transponder that has been tested successfully and will hopefully be ready by 2008.

This will require a difference to be filed with ICAO. Eurocontrol is now showing interest in this development.

If a suitable transponder is NOT available for unpowered aircraft by 2008 then those aircraft will be granted an exemption in the UK.

In 2005 the CAA will conduct a full RIA, a Regulatory Impact Assessment, for the introduction of Elementary Mode S transponders. This will be the time when all General Aviation organisations and individuals can have their say on this important topic.

A mode S code can be applied for at Gatwick. They need only the glider type and the BGA number and they will allocate the code. Telephone 01293 768374 or fax 01293 573860

8.33 KHz RADIOS

These radios have been developed at great expense to give Air Traffic Control more frequencies in very busy areas. At present these frequencies are being used only in the airspace above FL245 in the UK and a little lower in Europe. The CAA recently sent out a consultation document to introduce the use of these frequencies en route down to FL195 and in the major TMAs: London and Manchester.

There are NO plans to introduce the use of these frequencies into the lower airspace and open FIR.

For high-level gliding, above FL195, where we currently have wave areas the military will continue to use frequencies that are available on our current radios. The plans for digital radios to be available by 2010 seem to be slipping by several years and therefore there may come a time by 2010 that all aircraft may be required to have radios that will have 8.33 kHz spacing. This is just speculation.

However, what is a fact is that such radios will never be cheap – this is due to the very expensive components within them.