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Airspace classification

Procedure for the CAA to review the classification of airspace

Effective December 2020, the CAA was given the function, by the Government, to review the classification of airspace and to amend them where appropriate. This function means that we must regularly consider whether to review the current classifications of airspace, consult airspace users as part of that review where we consider a change to classification might be made, and amend it ourselves in accordance with our classification review procedure.

We are also required to seek to ensure that the amount of controlled airspace is the minimum required to maintain a high standard of air safety and, subject to overriding national security or defence requirements, that the needs of all airspace users are reflected on an equitable basis.

What is airspace classification?

The [Air Navigation Directions \(/Commercial-industry/Airspace/Airspace-change/Legislative-framework-to-airspace-change/\)](#) have long required the CAA to publish a national policy for the classification of airspace. ICAO requires that States determine those portions of airspace where air traffic services will be provided and, where it is so determined, whether air traffic control service or flight information service are provided. In turn, the airspace is designated according to the type of air traffic service provided and in accordance with the ICAO airspace classification system. Air traffic control service is provided to all flights within airspace classes A to D and to those flights operating in accordance with the instrument flight rules (IFR) in class E airspace; these are known as 'controlled airspace' classifications. Flight information service may be provided to all flights in class G (uncontrolled airspace) and to visual flight rules (VFR) flights in Class E airspace.

The procedure for reviewing airspace classification

The procedure is set out in [CAP 1991 Procedure for the review of airspace classification \(/CAP1991\)](#) and has three distinct stages:

- **Consider**, in which the CAA commits to carrying out a review of airspace classifications every two years, with the possibility to defer the review by up to one year.
- **Review**, in which we use appropriate intelligence, including continuous monitoring of airspace safety, access or utilisation issues, and data via our [FCS1522 UK Airspace Access or Refusal of Air Traffic Services Report Form \(https://apply.caa.co.uk/CAAPortal/form.htm?formCode=fcs1522\)](#), to draw up a plan that lists airspace volumes where a case could be made for a proposed amendment to the classification, and a proposed schedule for when we will address them. We consult organisations in the Airspace Modernisation Strategy governance structure that represent airspace users in order to draw up a refined plan.
- **Amend**, in which, for each airspace volume identified, the CAA further develops a formal proposal for amending the classification, with essential input from the designated controlling authority for the airspace concerned, and then consults those impacted by the final proposals.

We are also providing a [short summary of the procedure \(/CAP1991A\)](#).

The procedure is completely separate from the [airspace change process set out in CAP 1616 \(/CAP1616\)](#).

Volumes of airspace to be reviewed in 2021

The first tranche of volumes of airspace that we will be looking to review in 2021 will be announced shortly. We will commence work on the first of these immediately with existing CAA resources, with our new dedicated team starting to arrive in January 2021.

All related documentation concerning this work will be published here, including:

- the status of the current review cycle (the stage, progress so far, proposed schedule)
- where the Review stage is in progress, details of any plan, draft or final, that lists airspace volumes where a case could be made for proposing an amendment to the classification (or for an alternative airspace management solution if this is a more proportionate response)
- where the Amend stage is in progress, details of any proposal for amending the classification that the CAA has made, and links to any public consultation (which will be accessed via the CAA's consultation website)
- the CAA's decision on any amendment
- the implementation arrangements for an amendment that has been approved by the CAA's Airspace Regulation team
- a report by the CAA on the effectiveness of an amendment (or the alternative airspace management solution, as applicable), one year after implementation.