

InFocus

Changes to Luton Airport departure routes

European and national projects are improving airspace infrastructure to deliver a more efficient use of airspace and enable environmental improvements, including fuel and CO₂ savings by aircraft flying more direct routes.

Luton Airport implemented a new departure route - RNAV-1 Standard Instrument Departure (SID) in August 2015, following a formal proposal to us for assessment in 2014 after a long period of trial activity. The changes in the proposal meant a move away from old ground-based navigation in order to utilise the improved navigational capabilities associated with satellite-based systems so departing aircraft follow more precise flight paths and many of the ground-based systems across the UK can eventually be switched off. In this instance, the proposal was approved in accordance with the Airspace Change Process (ACP).

The final stage of the ACP is the Post Implementation Review (PIR) and this occurs approximately one year after implementation of the airspace change. The purpose of the PIR is for the CAA, as the independent regulator, to assess whether the change has delivered the anticipated impacts and benefits set out in the original airspace change proposal and decision, and if not to ascertain why and determine the most appropriate course of action.

What consultation took place?

As part of the ACP the change sponsor, Luton Airport, was required to undertake a stakeholder consultation that involved the representative organisation of those likely to be affected by the proposal. A list of the stakeholder groups can be found via the [consultation documents](#). Luton Airport was required to publicise its consultation by press release to enable members of the public to participate in the consultation if they so wished.



What did our regulatory assessment of the proposal involve?

Following the consultation, Luton Airport submitted its formal airspace change proposal to us for assessment. During the regulatory decision phase of the ACP we review the operational aspects of a proposal, its environmental impact and the standard of the stakeholder consultation activity undertaken, to determine whether or not the proposal meets the required regulatory standards. In this instance, our assessment concluded that it had met those standards and it was approved.

In relation to the environmental impact of the proposal, we are bound to take into consideration the Secretary of State for Transport's 'Guidance to the CAA on environmental objectives relating to the exercise of its air navigation functions'. That guidance outlines government policy that, in general, air traffic should be concentrated with the aim of avoiding the overflight of the most number of people. In this instance, the proposal sought to avoid the overflight of the major conurbations of Hemel Hempstead, St Albans and Harpenden and, as such, conformed to government policy. Our approval of the routeing was in relation to both its position over the ground and its relationship with other flight paths and was mindful of any changes that would be likely to occur as a consequence of the revised RNAV-1 routeing and its anticipated aircraft traffic pattern.

What happens next?

The PIR associated with this particular change was postponed to allow the airport to revise the SID to resolve flyability issues associated with particular aircraft types. The revised SID became operational on 2 February 2017.

As part of the PIR we have asked Luton to provide us with details of complaints they receive from when the original RNAV SID was implemented on 20 August 2015 up to 30 September 2017. Comments about the use of the revised SID should be sent to Luton in accordance with their complaints procedure.

Further updates will be made available on this matter at:

www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-industry/Airspace/Airspace-change/Reviews/Luton-runway-26-PIR.