



Highland Gliding Club Ltd

Chairman,



10th March 2017

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter dated the 7th of February. It was addressed to [REDACTED] at Highland Gliding Club. [REDACTED] is President of Cairngorm Gliding Club and has no connection with Highland Gliding Club. It therefore took some time to obtain permission to open the letter. Having done so, it became clear that most of the request for information is for the Highland Gliding Club, hence my responding to you now. I have received some feedback from [REDACTED] who is their airspace representative at Cairngorm Gliding Club regarding your reference to the Gussi box. I have inserted his comments below:

"I would like to disabuse the author of the truth of "We understand that our current agreement for the operation of the "Gussi Box" meets the need to mitigate the effect of the N560 Class E+TMZ airspace on your community". This is completely incorrect.

The Gussi Box is very small. It doesn't really achieve anything except removing the need to contact Scottish when in there without a transponder. However, it specifically prescribes that the pilot must have an RT licence and a radio that works on 130.100. Since any such pilot can easily contact Scottish (no-one has a radio that only works on 130.1 these days) this LoA is of little practical use. As far as I know this box has NEVER been activated. In any case, the issue with Inverness is not so much about that bit of N560 with its current base of FL105, the most pressing problem would be with the proposed new CTA8 with its base of 6000'amsl which comes within less than 4 miles of our airfield whilst being 30 miles from Inverness."

In answer to your other questions directed at the Highland Gliding Club, I have done my best to give you the information you are looking for below:

- *Average number of daily launches at weekends and bank holidays*
 - This can range from 1 to 60 in a day so taking an average is not a good measure of how busy we are
 - On a good day we will have up to 12 gliders airborne at the same time
 - We fly midweek when conditions are good as well as weekends; midweek flying tends to be done by more experienced members who are more likely to fly cross country
 - We have a number of powered aircraft based on our site who regularly fly during the week
- *Average daily number of transits across Inverness airport*
 - Negligible and there will be virtually no aerotows that far from our airfield unless we were towing a glider to say Dornoch for an event. If that was the case, the tug pilot would talk to Inverness to cross the instrument approaches
 - Soaring conditions directly over Inverness are generally not very good so the majority of any traffic will be to the south of the airport
 - Crossings will be more common in wave conditions when we are usually above 5000', these are more commonly done by gliders from Portmoak and Aboyne than Easterton
- *Percentage of gliders at Easterton fitted with VHF radio*
 - 100% of our gliders that fly cross country are fitted with VHF radio
 - At least 70% of our cross country flying members have an RT License and many of them are PPL license holders
 - The gliding club is actively encouraging members to obtain an RT license
- *Main Operating Areas*
 - Our main operating areas are anywhere to the south of our airfield and down the Spey valley
 - However, we operate where the favourable weather is to be found and that can often be seen to be west of Inverness so we will route along the moors to the west of us regularly if conditions are good
 - Cross country is possible in thermal and wave conditions in any wind direction with cloudbases from 2000' AMSL upwards; there are no favourable months, good conditions occur all year round

Not all flight traces are uploaded to a database so I can only provide a limited number of examples. These are not necessarily indicative of how often the airspace is used but give an idea of where we fly. That said, please see the charts below to give you an idea of where and how often gliders use the airspace that will become inaccessible to us should you achieve your aim of Class D around Inverness. These flights will range in height from ground level up to FL195 so height information is not helpful in these examples because by their very nature, gliders cannot maintain fixed levels and will have a large height range over relatively small distances.

The first three images are of all flights each year, for the last three years, that have been uploaded to the British Gliding Association National Ladder Database. These are dependent upon pilots uploading the files so will only be a limited percentage of all the flights carried out.

Image 1 – Flights uploaded Jan 2016 to Present

Flight Paths for Request 'North Scotland'

Latitude 57.30 to 57.89, Longitude -5.00 to -3.12;
Flights passing through the selected area from 01-Jan-2016 to 10-Mar-2017
Altitude -1000 to 35000 feet
All days
62 flights plotted

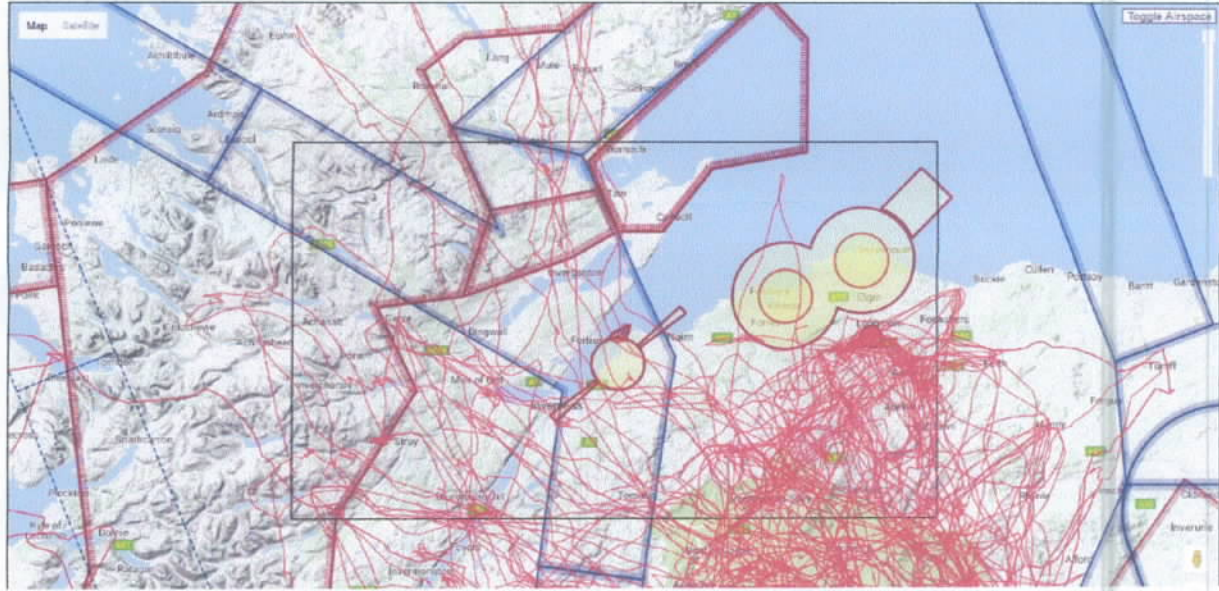


Image 2 – Flights uploaded in 2015

Flight Paths for Request 'North Scotland'

Latitude 57.30 to 57.89, Longitude -5.00 to -3.12;
Flights passing through the selected area from 01-Jan-2015 to 31-Dec-2015
Altitude -1000 to 35000 feet
All days
50 flights plotted

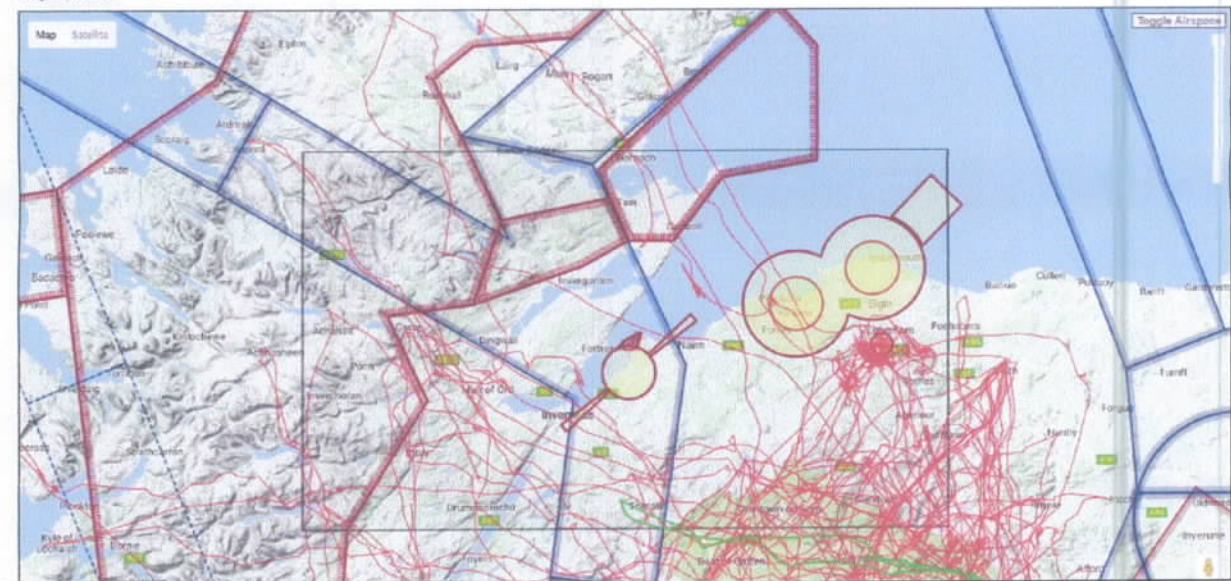
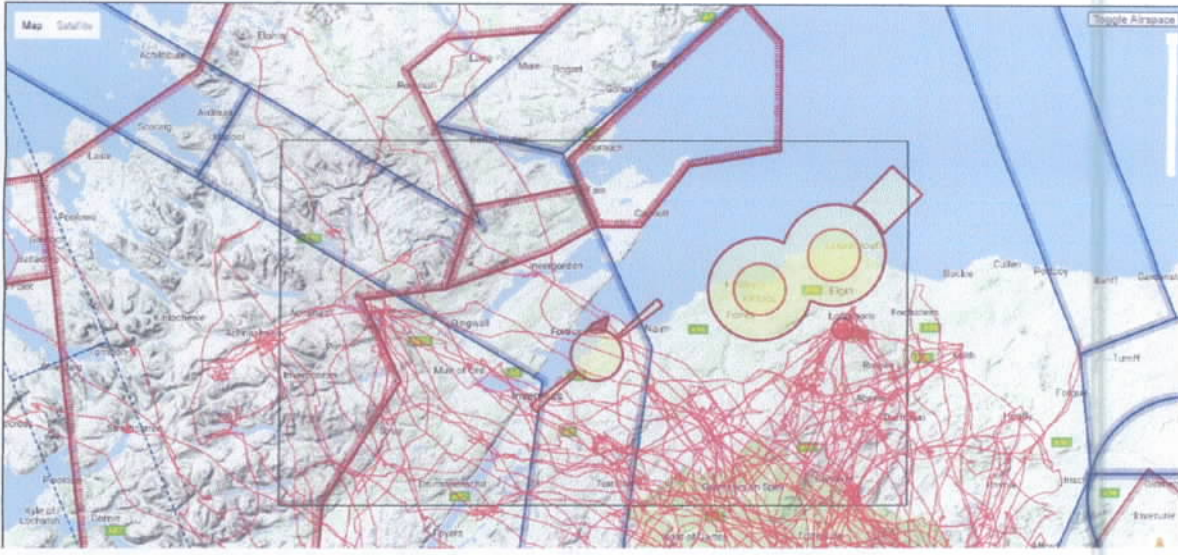


Image 3 – Flights uploaded in 2014

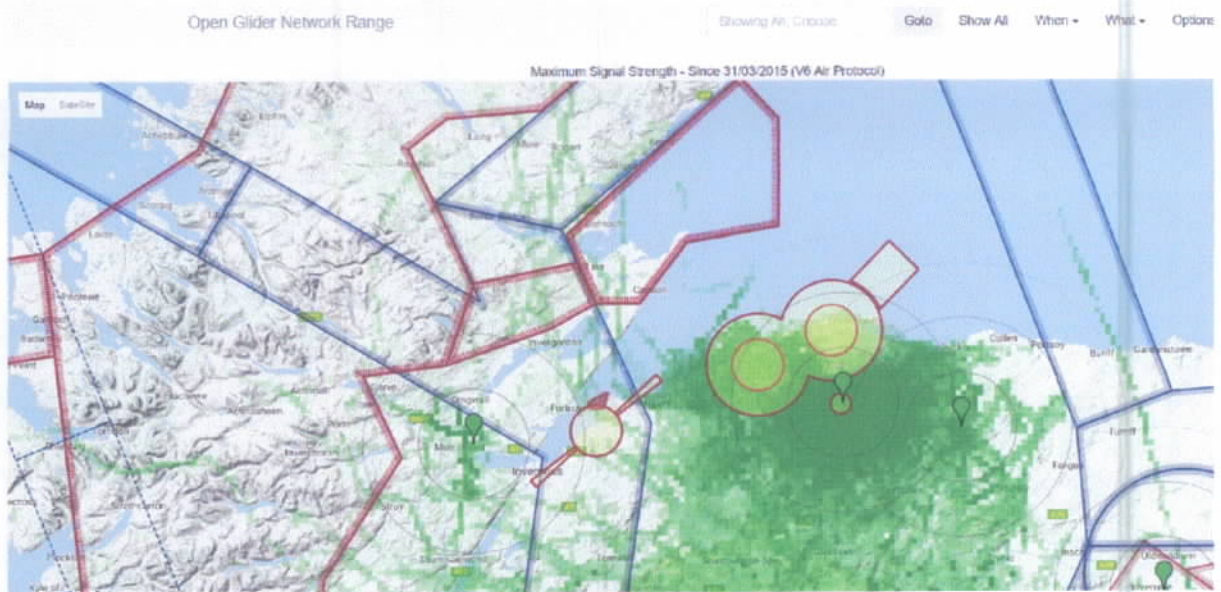
Flight Paths for Request 'North Scotland'

Latitude 57.30 to 57.89, Longitude -5.00 to -3.12;
Flights passing through the selected area from 01-Jan-2014 to 31-Dec-2014
Altitude -1000 to 35000 feet
All days
59 flights plotted



The last image below is a heatmap taken from an online FLARM website which shows where gliders fitted with FLARM have been picked up by base stations. In the last year, most gliders in Scotland have been fitted with FLARM so this gives a good picture of busy areas. However, the effective range of each ground base station is limited so beyond 30km, flights under approximately 4000' will not register.

Image 4 – FLARM fitted Aircraft registering since March 2015



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The questions you pose suggest you are looking for statistics to demonstrate how little gliding activity there is in the area West of Inverness. This is not how this should be viewed. For gliding as well as other GA, the proposed airspace around Inverness represents a major loss of freedom to fly in the north of Scotland. This is airspace we have used for decades which we know will be forever denied to us if you achieve your aim of widespread Class D airspace. Exploring the soaring potential of the Northwest of Scotland is a relatively recent development in the gliding movement and has already produced record breaking flights which place Scotland as one of the premier parts of Europe for wave soaring. For example, visiting German pilots recently flew to Stornoway and back.


Current proposals will deny Easterton access to any airspace west of the village of Dallas which we often aerotow to in the search for wave conditions. This is very damaging to our ability to attract new members and develop our existing pilots. Therefore, it is the airspace to the East of Inverness that will have the biggest impact on our operations.

There is an issue with overflight of controlled airspace in gliders. Due to the vagaries of wave soaring, if it is necessary to guarantee that no descent into controlled airspace will occur, a very large safety margin has to be applied, perhaps 10,000' or more. This severely limits the days on which overflight could occur. Currently, flights directly over Inverness airport are not really an issue as this can easily be avoided, however flights over the very large tract of proposed class D airspace certainly are an issue since the proposal blocks off a large area of land at the eastern edge of Scotland, making transits to the North very difficult

We would like to find ways to allow us to work with you so that a practical solution to airspace access can be found. We cannot support Class D airspace as we know from experience that we will not be able to access that airspace on a regular basis. The strongest evidence for this lies with Deeside Gliding Club who are based 3nm from Aberdeen's CTA. Virtually no gliders enter that airspace despite frequent good soaring conditions in that area.

If you have any questions or would like a meeting, please use me as your main point of contact for the Highland Gliding Club for any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the Chairman.

Chairman, Highland Gliding Club Ltd