

Vertiport Stakeholder Working Group (VSWG): Terms of Reference

Context

The Future of Flight Action Plan aims to enable the demonstration of piloted eVTOL flights in the UK in 2026 as a first step to scaled operations and a sustainable industry.

To achieve initial, scaled and sustainable operations, the UK Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) has determined that a number of Implementing Rules (IR), Approved Means of Compliance (AMC), Guidance Material (GM) and other documents need to be considered to enable safe operations VTOL Capable Aircraft (VCA).

To assist with this, a working group comprised of stakeholders and representatives from industry is being established to support the CAA policy teams and other subject matter experts tasked with developing policy and regulation pertaining to vertiports established at a location other than an existing licensed or certificated aerodrome. The project comprises 4 key elements when developing this new style of aerodrome including vertiport design, obstacle limitation surfaces/ volume, visual aids and rescue and firefighting services (RFFS). Other areas of discussions will include vertiport licencing, Safety Management Systems (SMS) and emergency planning/emergency orders.

As part of this process, the CAA is committed to ensuring that needs and expectations of stakeholders align with the development and implementation of vertiports, maintaining a high standard of safety while continuing to promote efficiency and innovation in aerodrome development and operations for VCAs.

To do this, we are establishing the Vertiport Stakeholder Working Group (VSWG) to facilitate engagement, discussion, and collaboration between the CAA and industry stakeholders.

Scope

The VSWG is established to facilitate effective engagement, discussion, and collaboration between the CAA and selected industry and community representatives relating to the topic of licensed vertiports. The VSWG aims to ensure that the development and implementation of the future regulatory framework aligns with the needs and expectations of stakeholders, that maintains a high standard of safety while promoting efficiency, and innovation in the evolution of the Future of Flight concept.

Objectives

The objectives of the VSWG are as follows:

Engagement:

Foster open and constructive dialogue between the CAA and external stakeholders to exchange information, share perspectives, and address concerns related to the vertiport rulemaking project.

Discussion:

Seek input from stakeholders to gather valuable insights, expertise, and diverse viewpoints regarding the design, implementation, and impact of the vertiport rulemaking project.

Collaboration:

Facilitate collaboration and cooperation amongst stakeholders to identify opportunities, resolve challenges, and develop practical solutions that meet the shared goals of enhancing Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) capabilities outside of the aerodrome environment.

Proposals and feedback:

Provide proposals and deliver feedback on specific aspects of the vertiport rulemaking project necessary for the implementation of new regulations, changing to existing regulations and the development of industry guidance and best practise.

Membership

Working Groups:

Four initial working groups will be established. These will be:

- Vertiport Design
- Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS) / Obstacle Free Volumes (OFV)
- Visual Aids
- Rescue and Firefighting Services
- Vertiport Licensing

Additional working groups may be established at any time, as required.

Composition:

The VSWG will comprise a diverse range of representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

- VCA Manufacturers/OEMs,
- Future VCA operators or other AOC holders, professional pilots, or other service providers and professional associations,
- Vertiport designers, operators, or other aviation professionals with relevant expertise in aerodrome design, operations, and regulation,
- Safety experts or other aviation professionals with relevant expertise in aerodrome operations and regulations (including RFFS),
- Any stakeholder with a legitimate interest in vertiport design and operations, who would like to participate in this rulemaking programme.

Selection Process:

The CAA shall invite potential stakeholders to participate in the VSWG based on their individual expertise, experience, and ability to contribute constructively to the objectives of the group. The selection process will apply transparent selection criteria which aim for a balanced representation of stakeholders, ensuring diversity and inclusivity.

The CAA will recruit stakeholders into four specific subgroups based on the categories described earlier in the document. Due to expertise and experience, some stakeholders could be appointed to more than one subgroup.

Term of Membership:

The term of membership for VSWG participants will be determined by the CAA and will align with the duration of the vertiport rulemaking process, which is expected to complete by the end of 2025.

Members may be asked to leave their sub-group if the CAA determines they are not contributing positively to the aims of the working group, including not sharing information openly with the group or not maintaining the confidentiality of the group. Members will be asked to leave their sub-group if they breach the terms of the non-disclosure agreement signed before taking up their working group membership.

In addition to members appointed to the working group via this application process it may be necessary for the CAA to appoint additional members, e.g., because a specific skill group is not represented, or a member leaves. Our intention to do so will be discussed at the working group before such a decision is made. However, the CAA's decision to appoint will be final.

Roles and Responsibilities

CAA Responsibilities:

- a) Provide relevant project updates, information, and documentation to VSWG members in a timely manner.
- b) Seek input and feedback from the VSWG on key project deliverables.
- c) Consider and address the recommendations raised by the VSWG, as appropriate.
- d) Collaborate with VSWG members to identify potential issues, risks, and opportunities associated with vertiport related rule changes.

VSWG Member Responsibilities:

- a) Act as a representative of their respective stakeholder group and provide input based on their expertise and experience.
- b) Attend and actively participate in VSWG events and complete any actions between such meetings, workshops, or discussions.
- c) Bring own experience, ideas, and documents to the working group, in certain instances, this may mean sharing ConOps and safety critical data with the CAA.
- d) Provide constructive feedback, recommendations, and suggestions to enhance the development and future effectiveness, safety, and stakeholder satisfaction of new regulation.
- e) Collaborate with other VSWG members to address common challenges and find mutually beneficial solutions.
- f) Maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information in accordance with the NDA signed before taking up membership.
- g) Acknowledge that there will be no payment for time spent on attending for or preparing for working group meetings or of expenses incurred in attending in person working group meetings.

Meeting Structure

Frequency:

Initially the VSWG will meet for two sessions within the first 30 days with the first meeting scheduled for October 16th, 2024, at Aviation House near Gatwick. The second meeting will occur on November 6th, 2024. Following this the VSWG subgroups will meet every month at a time that suits the group, however it is recommended that meetings occur more regularly to complete the work in a timely manner. Occasional VSWG wide meetings may be called for attendance of all sub-groups to deliver project updates. All meeting frequencies will be reviewed by the CAA and may be adjusted depending on project timescales and the level of stakeholder engagement required to support individual project phases.

Meeting Formats:

VSWG subgroup meetings may take various formats, including face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings and/or workshops, depending on the circumstances and availability of participants.

Agenda:

The CAA, in discussion with VSWG subgroup members, will develop the agenda for each meeting. The agenda shall reflect the key topics, objectives, and any pre-circulated materials that require discussion or decision-making.

Meeting Facilitation:

VSWG subgroup meetings will be facilitated by a Vertiport, Heliport or Aerodrome Policy Specialist / Specialist / Principal representative from AAA or a suitable nominated delegate as and when required.

Reporting

Progress Reports:

The CAA shall provide periodic progress reports to subgroups within the SWG, outlining updates on the VSWG workstream development, milestones achieved, and any significant decisions made.

Communication Channels:

The CAA shall establish appropriate communication channels to facilitate ongoing interaction and information sharing between VSWG members, including email correspondence, online collaboration platforms, and dedicated project updates.

Review and Evaluation

Review Process:

The effectiveness and impact of the VSWG shall be periodically reviewed by the CAA to assess its contribution to the project's success, stakeholder satisfaction, and achievement of objectives.

Feedback and Improvements:

Based on review findings, the CAA may seek feedback from VSWG members to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary adjustments to enhance the VSWG's effectiveness and efficiency.

The CAA reserves the right to change the objectives or membership of the group or may discontinue the group if we determine that the group is no longer meeting its stated aims.

Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended or updated as deemed necessary by the CAA to reflect changing project requirements, stakeholder needs, or other relevant factors. Amendments will be communicated to the VSWG in a timely manner.

We will continue to review the membership of the group periodically to ensure the representation remains reflective of the industry and the challenges we face.