

Minutes of the 15th meeting of the National Counter-UAV Independent Stakeholder Advisory Group

Held via *Teams* on Wednesday 10th January 2024

Attendees

- S40(2)** (NPCC Counter Drones team)
- S40(2)** (ARPAS-UK)
- S40(2)** **S31(1)**
- S40(2)** (NPCC Counter Drones team)
- S40(2)** (Altitude Angel)
- S40(2)** (DJI)
- S40(2)** (Geeksvana)
- S40(2)** (CAA)
- S40(2)** (Reading University)
- S40(2)** **S31(1)**
- S40(2)** (Bird and Bird)
- S40(2)** (BMFA)
- S40(2)** (RAF)
- S40(2)** (Arup – Chair)

Apologies

- S40(2)** (FPVUK)
- S40(2)** (Fraser Nash Consultancy)

1. **Welcome:** S40(2)** welcomed attendees (referred to below by their initials). A round of introductions were made.
2. **Minutes of the 14th meeting** held on Thursday 5th October 2023 were approved. Of the action points not completed or covered by other agenda items,
 - the information leaflets; the link to download them is at <https://www.geeksvana.com/downloads>. SH explained that one had the NPCC and Geeksvana logos on and so was not for rebranding but the other one contained information in a more generic template which could be utilised by other organisations. In case of questions please contact SH directly.
 - Police course training materials: S40(2)** explained that practical dissemination issues needed to be overcome but these would be sent to members as soon as possible.
 - Member's attendance on training courses: the open offer to observe was still there. Possible opportunities are:
 - Effector course: 12th – 16th February in **S31(1)** (15th being the practical demonstration day);
 - Two-day Observers courses; 6th – 7th February in **S31(1)** and 11th - 12th February in **S31(1)**;
 - Tactical advisors' course; 25th March

Please contact S40(2)** for further information and/or to register interest. He noted that assistance was required to provide course attendees e.g., on the Bronze Commanders with contact details for the extant drone communities in their areas. Following discussion, it was agreed that the group could help at least with the provision of national points of contact through which officers could go to contact local user groups to assist with their work.

Action point: members to provide appropriate organisational contact details to S40(2)** for collation and forwarding to S40(2)**.

- Threat update; S40(2)** explained that S40(2)** (the analyst) was on leave, but this would be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Action point; S40(2)**

- Point-of-sale information leaflet; S40(2)** explained that a further meeting with S31(1)** had been scheduled and he would be able to forward this to the group in February.

Action point; S40(2)**

3. **Drone use - statistical update:** S40(2)** explained his concerned that simple headline statistics such as 18,290 reported drone flights aggregated over a number of years were being used e.g., in Government consultation documents and then reported in the media without context or explanation which was exacerbating anti-drone sentiment and potentially skewing the number and nature of responses to consultations etc. His concerns were shared by many other members.

S40(2)** explained that the onus was on Police forces to filter their data so that only genuine drone-related incidents were recorded. It was noted that some of the events referred to in the S40(1)** FOIA response were very vague and often of no use in determining if a drone had been involved, if crime has been committed and if further action was necessary. S40(2)** was concerned that if all detection data e.g., around airports (S40(2)** provided detail from a typical period in the chat) and prisons was also included then that figure would increase exponentially. S40(2)** noted that the figures related to “reports and incidents” rather than “crimes”. S40(2)** felt that it would also be useful if that base number was then qualified by the number of actual charges and convictions which resulted. S40(2)** also argued that it should be contextualised in relation to the number of permitted flights. S40(2)** felt it would be helpful if model flying could be distinguished from drones.

Action point; S40(2)** to feed members concerns back to CAA drone policy and communication teams.

Action point; S40(2)** and S40(2)** to consider further what messaging could be drafted and disseminated to provide a more accurate picture, drawing on other members as needs be.

Action point: S40(2)** to contact all major Airports (S40(2)** suggests top 10 in the UK, which should all have some forms of CUAS) in the UK to get a figure on unauthorised flights recorded, so the group have some form of baseline data on which to begin filtering

4. **Understanding the risk of MAC with a small drone from a military perspective:** S40(2)** presented, explaining her role and the activity which had taken place to date to inform and execute the military 3E strategy (engagement, equipment and environment). *In essence whilst airprox reports were plateauing at around 80 p.a., the military - small UAS incidents had increased by 26% in 2023 and that was viewed as the visible tip of the iceberg.* She referred to two case studies and the Machynlleth Loop (used for valley flying practice) where military flights had been temporarily suspended following drone related incidents. Drone use in such areas was not banned so she viewed engagement with drone-using communities (e.g., using information posters) as the key to reduce the risk of collision. There was also a low flying booking cell linked to the Central Aviation Deconfliction Service (CADS) where drone users could voluntarily inform the military of their flights.

Group members recognised the issue. S40(2)** noted that he saw a lot of traffic on the topic. Various members offered to take up particular aspects with S40(2)** e.g., on the updating and sharing of the information poster, technical improvements to the reporting mechanism etc. S40(2)** provided the link to the latest EASA-sponsored collision study work <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/newsroom-and-events/events/vulnerability-manned-aircraft-drone-strikes>

5. **Local Government regulation; statement of requirements**

S40(2)** thanked members for their comments and apologised for the time taken to circulate the revised, considerably shorter draft. S40(2)** noted he had a few editorial comments and S40(2)** and S40(2)** would also provide comments on some of the terminology used and the references made, e.g., to UTMI. It was recognised that members needed further time to consider and provide comment. S40(2)** noted that after this round of comments it would then be time to engage with the LG community e.g., the LGA SASIG, reps from Oxford, Coventry and Reading known to be active in the sector, to take their views on the usefulness or otherwise of the paper and how it could be improved and then disseminated.

S40(2)** sits on the Future of Flight Community Action Group which also has a number of LGA who would be very interested to read this (over 20 ppl on the panel) – see the member list - <https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/news/transforming-aviation-together-launching-the-future-flight-community-integration-group/>

Action point; member to provide comments to S40(2)** as soon as possible and by Friday 26th January at the latest on i) the current draft and ii) suggested engagement with the LG community.

6. **Mobile App; S40(2)**** introduced the topic, essentially to develop a user-friendly automated means to provide officers and members of the public alike with up-to-date information e.g., on changes to legislation. S40(2)** noted that Altitude Angel already have such an App and it was agreed that if possible increased and improved use should be made of what was already out there rather than starting afresh.

Action point; S40(2)**, S40(2)** and S40(2)** to discuss further.

7. **Drone Audit Working Group;** this topic had been recognised previously by the group and further examples of the very detrimental impacts such activities can have on individuals, both members of the public and police officers, who could be filmed, and that footage then put on-line. S40(2)** noted that the report of the Police-led Study group was due to be released shortly.

Action point; S40(2)** to provide the report to S40(2)** for further dissemination to the group once available.

8. **Members' updates**

- i) NPCC C-UAV unit; S40(2)** reported that:
- On proposals for the introduction of Remote ID; noting the 1/1/26 implementation date, he and colleagues were actively engaged with the consultants to produce high level requirements which would then lead to wider engagement on the detail. He noted that there were mismatches between the wider European picture and the UK e.g., on the use of geo-fencing in the UK and "geo-awareness" in Europe and therefore between extant regulations and the emerging high-level requirements.
 - The National Security Act would come into force on 26/1/24 which unidentified "prohibited places" and governed the resultant ability to fly near them. Restrictions around prisons were already in place. S40(2)** noted they had now been mapped and were going live on 25 January;
 - The most prevalent criminal drone usage continued to be around prisons and police including organised crime units were working with the Ministry of Justice to co-ordinate and focus efforts to counter this;
 - The DJI Aeroscope V2 was being introduced. S40(2)** (who had to leave the meeting early) undertook to get back to S40(2)** on concerns about the use of dongles to connect to this.
 - Commercial testing processes; 4 companies had responded to the call for RFI effects (jammers) and processes and standards were now in place for the future testing of those. There was also a call out for kinetic solutions. The nature of the bids received would inform the trials which it was planned to undertake with CNC assistance. The NPSA was investigating drone-mounted mini-radar to enhance detect and avoid capabilities. It was hoped that a proposed project for the Office of the Chief Scientific Officer to look at acoustic sensors would be approved. It was noted that all of these varying initiatives and potential funding sources needed be mapped.

- Independent review of the NPCC Counter-drone unit's work; 3 bids had been received to undertake that short study of its structure and operational model;
 - Paris Olympics; the French authorities had spent a reputed €350 million on CV-UAV equipment.
 - The NPCC Comm strategy was now in place and a rejuvenation of the Operation Foreverwing initiative was being considered.
- ii) S40(2)**: noted that the DJI geo-fencing had changed dramatically with flights now being registered as amber ("acknowledge") rather than red. An information piece was to be streamed that evening. S40(2)** noted the link back to remote ID and the use of geo-fencing.

9. AOB

Suggestions for additional group members was discussed.

Action points:

- S40(2)** to approach i) S40(2)** from the Grey Arrows Drone Club (a dedicated nationwide flying association for **drone** enthusiasts with a sizeable membership) and ii) S40(2)**, the Transport Innovation Manager at Coventry City Council (as a potential LG rep) to see if they would be willing to join the group; and
- S40(2)** to research further as to what a representative from Sentinel flight might add to the group and to try to identify a potential representative from Amazon to facilitate a further discussion at the next meeting.

10. **Date of next meeting:** Wednesday, 10th April 2024 @ 10.30. This would possibly be held in person in London with the option to dial in. Members' views would be canvassed nearer the time.

End