

INFRINGEMENT HOTSPOTS FACE BIG REDUCTION TARGETS

The number of serious airspace infringements at six of the highest-risk air traffic zones in the UK, should be cut by much as 50 per cent over the next 12 months, to head off the need for further action, the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has announced. Possible options under consideration, should the target for the particular hotspot not be met, include the deployment of bespoke 'surveillance mandatory zones'.

Working teams, made up of local pilots, airport operators, air traffic controllers and CAA representatives, in each of the 'hotspots', have agreed the targets and committed to delivering the reductions through improvements to current procedures by December 2015. The six hotspots, which account for a significant proportion of the annual UK total, are:
Birmingham, Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, Southampton, Stansted

The new strategy follows significant efforts over a number of years to educate general aviation pilots on how to avoid infringing Controlled Airspace, Danger Areas and Temporary Restricted Airspace. However, despite such campaigns, by the Airspace & Safety Initiative (ASI) and others, infringement rates have shown no significant decline over the last ten years.

The reduction targets include both high risk and overall numbers of infringements, with a success target based on high risk event numbers. The Southampton Local Airspace Infringement Team (LAIT), for example, will need to see high risk infringements reduce from the current annual average of 23 to 12. Failure to achieve the target could see the future introduction of surveillance mandatory zones (SMZ) to provide a conspicuity buffer around particular hotspot. The aim of the SMZ will be to provide a 'known traffic environment' around the hotspot's class D airspace. This could lead to a requirement for the mandatory use of radios and/or transponders in that buffer area. Other options, such as rationalising airspace boundaries, are also a potential solution.

The LAITs for each hotspot have been established and regular meetings are already underway. ASI will notify the general aviation community of their progress over the coming months.