

## **CAA Consultation: changes to the provision of UK aerodrome weather warnings**

**Response by the Airport Operators Association  
28 February 2014**

This response is made by the Airport Operators Association (AOA). The AOA is the trade body representing the interests of UK airports. The AOA membership comprises some 50+ airports from all parts of the UK, within which all of the nation's major airports are represented.

### **1. Executive Summary**

The AOA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the CAA proposals for the changes to the provision of UK aerodrome weather warning functions previously provided by the CAA.

The DfT's CAA (Air Navigation) Directions require the CAA to discharge the responsibility of the Meteorological Authority, as defined by ICAO. This is "to arrange for the provision of meteorological service for international air navigation". Therefore, the CAA has an obligation to ensure that, as a minimum, certain meteorological (Met) services and products specified in (ICAO) Annex 3 to the Chicago Convention are provided.

In order to meet this obligation, the Met Office is designated to provide ICAO-specified aeronautical Met warnings and forecasts for the UK and beyond. This enables, among others, pilots to obtain meteorological information that may assist in meeting the requirements of Article 86 of the Air Navigation Order and allow aircraft operators, air navigation service providers and airports take account of weather conditions in their planning and execution of operations.

The service currently consists of a message in plain text using a pre-defined template for each phenomenon. Aerodrome warnings are disseminated currently by Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network (AFTN), fax or email, to one point of contact on the aerodrome, which ensures that the overhead costs of maintaining address lists and other information are minimised.

#### **The key changes that are proposed are as follows:**

- Aerodrome warnings to be issued via a new web-based product, supported by an optional email alert.
- Warnings to be freely accessible at the point of use to multiple users (subject to registration).
- Warnings will be issued routinely every 6 hours, 4 times per day, for the period 6-12 hours ahead.
- Integration and coherence with the Public Weather Service National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS).
- Optional, more specific, and paid-for, supplementary service, including continuation of the current service for additional granularity, continuous review and more direct means of communication.

## **2. AOA observations and concerns**

**The AOA's detailed observations and points of concern are summarised as follows:**

- AOA members are generally happy to manage the current service, providing there are no additional costs.
- AOA members believe these warnings also go to airlines and other stakeholders; they therefore question, why should it solely be down to the airport operator to carry the burden of the cost?
- AOA members note that in the event of disruption, there is a fear that warnings may be missed as the teams will have to go and look for the information as opposed to it coming directly to the desk.
- Some AOA members have commented that they already pay the Met Office for winter forecasts and are concerned that they will now also have to pay for the summer part of the service which covers strong winds, fog and thunderstorms.
- AOA members believe that the charge of £6k per aerodrome is excessive; given that there are in excess of 50 licensed aerodromes, there appears to be little justification for £300k costs to provide these warnings.
- AOA members believe the proposed changes to the provision of UK Aerodrome Weather Warnings present the likelihood of a significant degradation to the standards of current provision, contrary to ICAO Annex 3.
- The AOA considers that the proposed web-based service would not and could not reliably provide the meteorological information necessary for the performance of several functions, and that the required level of performance would only be available through the optional paid-for service.
- AOA members consider that the proposed 6 hour intervals would fail to provide appropriate information, and that the resultant service provision would put the CAA in default of its obligations under ICAO Annex 3.
- AOA members were curious to know whether there would be an alerting service or whether they would be responsible for monitoring the website.
- AOA members were also curious to discern if the responsibility still lay with the airport operator to forward warnings to stakeholders, and what would be the best way of forwarding information.

### **3. Conclusion**

The AOA and its members are extremely concerned that any proposed additional services “at cost” are not acceptable and that an updated free of charge service would be preferred, if practicable.

The AOA welcomes further discussion with the CAA on taking this matter forward before any decisions are finally made.

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