

Brief for Parliamentary Aviation Group

Olympic Airspace Restrictions – 29 June 2011

Background

On 7 March Theresa Villiers announced a 60 mile diameter restricted airspace zone (RZ) around the Olympics village.

Subsequently DfT and Home Office published a much larger, irregular shaped RZ approx 80 miles in diameter and almost double that area. It is effective continuously from 13 July to 12 September even outside the Olympic Periods:

- GA understands the need for security measures but is alarmed by the size and duration of the RZ and the overly bureaucratic requirements for entry.
- GA VFR traffic, including gliders and microlights may be able to access the RZ, but only if carrying a transponder and radio, after filing a flight plan via computer at least 2 hours in advance and if given a clearance code. No changes to the filed route or time will be permitted.
 - A significant number of aircraft (including almost all gliders) are not equipped with transponders
 - Arrangements for flight plan filing indicate that inadequate capacity exists to manage the anticipated demand
- CAA has stated that ATC capacity for the RZ will be limited. The clear message is that it will not be business as usual for GA, which will be actively discouraged from entering or operating within the RZ.
- When the main RZ was announced it was stated that there will be additional restrictions around those venues outwith London. As of now there hasn't even been an announcement as to when the details of these will be published.

Separately, the CAA, NATS and some airports are developing additional areas of controlled airspace to handle increased commercial passenger traffic.

Map of Restricted and Prohibited Zones is at **Attachment 1**

Situation

Many small airfields are inside the RZ but are well outside the Government's original 60 mile circle. Airfields within 3 miles of the RZ border may apply for access corridors but the severe restrictions will prevent most flying and training from other airfields in the RZ.

A survey has shown there are at least 78 GA airfields and landing sites within the RZ employing some 1150 people and with 1500 based aircraft. These airfields based on sample analysis estimate their potential loss of income at £16 million. As a result of the loss of income many such airfields and their associated businesses will fail incurring much larger long term losses for the sector:

- Most GA airfields within the RZ will be unable to operate economically during the periods 13 July to 12 September.
- This is the main business season for aviation with a large proportion of annual income generated in that period; many airfields, businesses and associated SMEs are likely to fail.
- Flying Schools, airfield cafes, fuel providers, aircraft repair and maintenance shops, and airfields themselves are at risk, as well as the many jobs they provide.
- Aircraft charter and helicopter commercial operators will be unable to access the RZ reliably or to respond to dynamic demand for their services. Far from benefiting from the Olympics, their businesses will be stifled.

The RZ entry procedures proposed to enable GA aircraft to enter the restricted zone are unworkable. For example, gliders are not able to follow a flight plan, charter operators cannot give 2 hours notice of all movements, and flying school training programmes will not accommodate rigid 2 hour flight plan and clearance notice periods that may not be approved.

Safety will be compromised if pilots press on in unfavourable circumstances (e.g. weather or unservicability) rather than face a 2 hour delay for any route or time amendment. Pilots who do not fly during the period will lose currency, making their flying potentially less safe after the event. Safety of flights outside the RZ will be reduced at the choke points between the RZ and other airspace or geographical limitations.

The proposed restrictions will have a significant and enduring impact on aviation infrastructure:

- There was no consultation or involvement of the GA sector.
- GA and Government needs to find a way to mitigate the damage, all suggestions made by GA so far have apparently been ignored and/or rebuffed.

Mitigation Options for GA

Normal contact channels through CAA and DfT are evidently unable to discuss Olympic security restrictions so GA has no forum to present its problems to government.

Some aircraft may transfer outside the RZ for the 2 month period, but most cannot in an operationally useful way. Where they do transfer away, airfields left in the RZ will lose income. Aircraft remaining in the RZ will have greatly reduced utilisation again reducing airfield income. Many airfields will thus be at financial risk.

Most aviation associated businesses and facilities cannot transfer and if they fail through lack of income for 2 months they are likely to be lost to us for the future:

- The restrictions are not needed in the period between the Olympics and Para-Olympics and arguably not for the Para-Olympics at all.

Some aviation businesses are so close to the Olympic Park that they will not be able to operate at all:

- We need to protect these financially but only Government has the means to address that.

The extension of the RZ from 60nm to a larger, irregular shape produces the majority of the financial and operational problems for GA:

- We need to find simple and practicable access arrangements for those airfields inside the RZ but outside the 60nm circle and we can only do that if Government is willing and will talk to us substantively.
- An RZ closer to the original 60nm declared to Parliament in the written statement would solve many of the problems for GA.
- Otherwise we need to find a way to protect their financial position too.

The access arrangements generally are cumbersome and unlikely work for GA:

- The GAA has proposed an alternative RZ entry system to include advance pilot security clearance, route definition, and capacity demand forecast.
- This would enable clearances to be issued without delay, and provided adequate ATC capacity is available would enable near-normal operations for some aircraft and helicopters.
- Need Government to consider this as a mitigation measure.
- For aerodromes close to the edges of the proposed RZ, simple agreed access corridors could be established and agreed.

Special arrangements are needed for gliders which cannot maintain a level or follow a closely defined clearance.

Summary

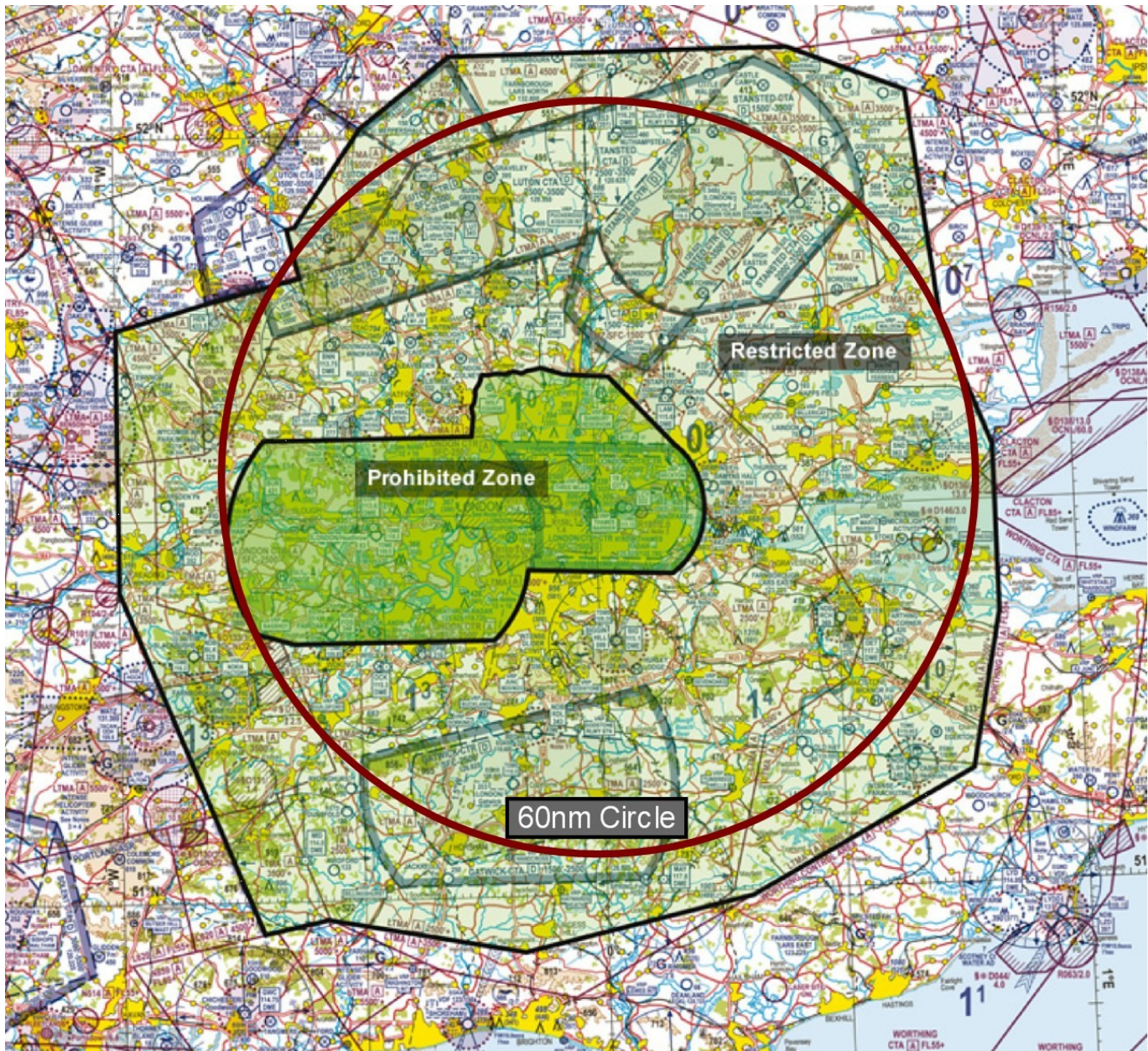
As they stand the known Olympic airspace restrictions will damage general aviation infrastructure permanently with a substantial number of business failures and job losses. The as yet unannounced additional restrictions could cause further damage in other parts of the country. It should be possible to mitigate the damage from the main RZ by better access arrangements, reviewing the restricted zone with regard for the operational implications and financial support for those businesses which will be damaged by the Olympic arrangements.

Prepared by the General Aviation Alliance

Attachment: Chart of Olympic Airspace

Olympic Restricted Zones

Attachment 1



- The restrictions will run continuously, with no break, from 13 July 2012 to 12 September 2012. All restrictions are from ground level to the base of controlled airspace.
- **Prohibited Zone:** IFR only, and only if all pax and crew are security screened at an airfield outside the PZ. They must also meet all the requirements to enter the Restricted Zone.
- **Restricted Zone:** Aircraft will be allowed to enter the Restricted Zone if they can comply with a set of requirements defined by aircraft type
- Exempt aircraft include Police and Medivac operations and aircraft operating for the Olympic Broadcast Service.