# MINUTES

**NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE (NPAS)**

**NATIONAL STRATEGIC BOARD (MEETING NUMBER 45)**

**03 March 2022 – via Teams**

**PRESENT**

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| **NAME** | **REPRESENTING** |
| PCC John Campion (JC) - Chair | Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia – West Midlands Region |
| T/ACC Ben Smith (BS) on behalf of CC Debra Tedds | T/Assistant Chief Constable Warwickshire Police – West Midlands Region |
| Elaine Grocock (EG) on behalf of PCC Rupert Matthews | Regional Collaboration Manager - OPCC for Leicestershire Police - East Midlands Region |
| CC Rachel Swann (RS) | Chief Constable Derbyshire Police – East Midlands Region |
| Alison Lowe (AL) | Deputy Mayor West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) |
| CC John Robins QPM (JR) | Chief Constable - West Yorkshire Police – Police Air Operations Certificate Holder (PAOC) |
| PCC Jonathan Evison (JE) | Police and Crime Commissioner Humberside - North East Region |
| ACO Gary Ridley (GR) on behalf of CC Jo Farrell | ACO, Durham Police - North East Region |
| PCC Peter McCall (PM) | Police and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria – North West Region |
| CC Mark Roberts (MR) | Chief Constable Cheshire Police – North West Region |
| Robin Merrett (RM) | Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime (MOPAC) |
| DAC Laurence Taylor (LT) | Metropolitan Police Service – London Region & Chair of NPAS IAG  NPCC Drones Lead |
| Ch/Supt Matt Thompson (MT) on behalf of CC Ben Julian-Harrington | Chief Superintendent Essex Police – Eastern Region |
| Ellie Vesey-Thompson (EVT) on behalf PCC Lisa Townsend | Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey - South East Region |
| CC John Campbell QPM | Chief Constable Thames Valley Police – South East Region |
| PCC Mark Shelford (MS) | Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon & Somerset – South West Region |
| Paul Butler (PB) | OPCC Avon & Somerset – South West Region |
| CI Matt Edwards (ME) on behalf CC Pam Kelly | Chief Inspector Gwent Police - Wales Region |
| CC Rod Hansen QPM (RH) | Chief Constable NPCC Aviation Lead - Gloucestershire Police - South West Region |
| Paul Morrissey (PM) | Staff Officer to CC Hansen – Gloucestershire Police – South West Region |
| Lianne Deeming (LD) | Chief Executive, BlueLight Commercial |
| Aphra Brannan (AB) | National Police Capabilities Unit - Home Office |
| ACC Scott Bisset (SB) | NPAS Chief Operating Officer/Accountable Manager |
| Katherine Johnson (KJ) | Assistant Chief Officer – Business Operations West Yorkshire Police |
| Mark Reeves (MR) | T/Director of Finance and Commercial Services – West Yorkshire Police |
| Glenn Shelley (GS) | NPAS Head of Business Services |
| James Cunningham (JCu) | NPAS Head of Aviation Safety |
| Steph McKenzie (SM) | NPAS Head of Technical Services |
| Pete Botchett (PB) | NPAS Head of Compliance and Futures & Innovations Lead |
| Scott Gallagher OBE (SG) | NPAS Project Manager |
| Lisa Fleming (LF) | NPAS Communications Lead |
| Rebecca Brookes (RB) | Head of Legal & Governance Services – West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) |
| Caroline Fleming (CF) | Commercial Lawyer, West Yorkshire Legal Services |
| Louise Williams (LW) | Regional Policy Officer – West Midlands Region |
| Caroline Peters (CP) | NPCC Aviation Programme Board |
| Angela Harrison (AH) | Chief Executive, Lancashire OPCC and SRO for the NPAS Governance Working Group |
| Sean Cooper (SC) | Solicitor, OPCC Wiltshire |
| Lianne Deeming (LD) | Chief Executive, BlueLight Commercial |
| Simon Efford (SE) | APCC Secretariat |
| Melanie Jaundziekars (MJ) | NPAS Executive Office Manager |
| Adam Smith (AS) | Deloitte |
| Jackie Lyons (JL) | Deloitte |
| Emily Kendle (EK) | Deloitte |

**APOLOGIES**

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| **NAME** | **REPRESENTING** |
| PCC Rupert Matthews | Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire Police – East Midlands Region |
| CC Shaun Sawyer QPM | Chief Constable Devon and Cornwall Police – South West Region |
| CC Debra Tedds | Chief Constable Warwickshire Police – West Midlands Region |
| PCC Lisa Townsend | Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey – South East Region |
| CC Jo Farrell | Chief Constable Durham Police – North East Region |
| PCC Dafydd Llywelyn | Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys Police – Wales Region |
| CC Pam Kelly | Chief Constable for Gwent Police – Wales Region |
| PCC Giles Orpen-Smellie | Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk Police – Eastern Region |
| CC Ben Julian-Harrington | Chief Constable Essex Police – Eastern Region |
| Chief Superintendent Vicki White | NPAS Transition |

# ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted and recorded.

# 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alison Lowe (AL) declared an interest in Item 10.

# 3. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2022

CC Mark Roberts (MR) raised that it had been agreed the Fixed Wing performance would be included in the Performance Report. It was important that the contribution Fixed Wing made to service delivery was understood in line with the benefits which were outlined as part of the business case to retain them.

**Action 45.1 – MJ to update the minutes outlining that NPAS have stated they will include fixed wing for the next four months within the overall performance reports going forward.**

# 4. ACTIONS

All actions were discharged.

# 5. MRO QUARTERLY REVIEW UPDATE

Steph McKenzie (SM) gave a short presentation and summarised the key points from the quarterly contract review for the period October – December 2021 and highlighted that NPAS has seen a slight decrease in availability compared to the previous quarter. SM explained that the MRO is still based on delivering the hours previous to the aviation review. Reducing these hours is currently underway through a Contract Change Notice (CCN) process. Due to the overruns in maintenance NPAS will see a lower than costs in February and resultant higher expected costs in March.

Service credits – contractual availability averaged out at 13.09 aircraft therefore service credits did not apply for this quarter.

CC John Robins (JR) highlighted the outsourced contract that NPAS have procured is now supporting more effective and efficient maintenance provision. It has improved availability underpinning improvements in overall performance.

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the update provided**

# 6. NPAS PERFORMANCE

ACC Scott Bisset (SB) presented the report and gave an overview of NPAS’ operational performance and service delivery. Average base availability is in the region of 70% and pilot recruitment continues to improve with minimal vacancies due to an change in the recruiting approach. SB advised members that NPAS has examined 20hr shift patterns but none are viable. NPAS need to recruit pilots and onto the existing 24hr shift pattern at those bases to reduce fatigue and distraction and increase availability as requested in the UR. The Fixed Wing aeroplanes will service demand as a result of gaps in service left by only 13 aircraft being available daily against a national requirement of 15. It is expected that both regional availability, decline and attendance rates will improve as a result of increasing capacity through the full introduction of Fixed Wing. Their contribution will be included in the next performance report.

SB advised that there is more work to do in understanding the true cost of drone deployment at force level in relation to training, vehicles, staff and kit as to establishing which is the most value for money in terms of a deployment. There is no clear baseline at the moment which enables a realistic and accurate comparison of costs or effectiveness. NPAS has clear evidence of being asked to attend incidents after a Drone deployment has failed.

MR raised that there needs to be a detailed analysis of demand, what drones are being used for to ensure the Service is happy that we are applying the right asset to the right task and not simply because it appears a cheaper option. There is a need to establish an effectiveness assessment.

SB stated that DAC Laurence Taylor had now taken the role of NPCC Drones Lead and this had already been discussed as part of further work on Drone development.

**Action 45.2 – SB to discuss with LT undertaking analysis of Drones usage and deployment.**

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the update provided**

# 7. NPAS SAFETY UPDATE

James Cunningham (JCu) gave a presentation and highlighted the significant increase in fatigue and distraction for all the flying crew i.e. pilot and tactical flight officers. Members were informed that the risks, with fatigue being the greatest risk, is likely to remain at heightened levels throughout 2022 but would appear to have stabilised.

JC stated that the risk of having an airborne conflict between a drone and a helicopter/fixed wing has increased due to encountering drones much more frequently within the airspace within which NPAS operates but is not one of the highest operational flight risks due to the processes NPAS has put into place with local Forces expected to inform the Ops Centre of any deployments in their Force areas.

A number of safety reports have been received from Barton (North West) due to having to cover extended distance due to being the only 24hr base in the region and travelling further outside of the geographical area. St Athan’s flying environment geographically is more challenging than some bases.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) continue to look at fatigue in detail and have approved NPAS to utilise the 1300-0100 shift pattern for a further six month period but are not content to make the pattern permanent at this stage due to the high levels of fatigue. A detailed fatigue survey is being conducted.

NPAS are currently experiencing one Serious Incident Rate (SIR) every fifteen months (the industry average is one every two years). NPAS have now received the report from the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) regarding the one engine inoperative (OEI) training practice with the 145 at North Weald. The AAIB made comment in their report and noted the serious incident occurred during a period of complex change but that the organisation had a robust and supportive approach to change. NPAS have now transferred this type of pilot training onto aircraft simulators to mitigate future risks.

A discussion took place regarding the effects of the operating model.

RH highlighted that a lot of change did not occur which could have and could this be used to balance some of the concerns during regional conversations to mitigate some of the issues raised and support where change might be appropriate.

MS highlighted that with the level of understanding down to base level operational mitigation could be identified at each base. SB stated that this was examined and mitigations which were suitable would be identified and implemented if possible. This would include improvements to the working environment including welfare and rest facilities.

JC commented that with the changes to the User Requirement the rate of flying is now reduced - at some bases this has introduced an element of boredom and crews not feeling they are utilised as much as they could be.

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the content of the report**

# 8. ROTARY FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Lianne Deeming (LD) advised the first strategy of the fleet replacement programme was progressing well. BlueLight Commercial (BLC) had put a lot of effort into making sure they had got current market engagement right - more than 20 events had taken place to help build the technical specifications and ensuring there was full understanding of the end user requirements to potential providers. This approach will bear fruit further down the line.

A Contract Notice has been issued via the Government’s Find a Tender Service on 26 January 2022 with a deadline of 28 February 2022 set for completion of the Standard Selection Questionnaire (SSQ) and the process has been well received so far by suppliers. The Board are required to continue to give BLC clear advice and direction so that BLC can continue to effectively engage with the market with confidence.

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the contents of the report and the progress made to date.**

# 9. NPAS FUTURES & INNOVATION PROGRAMME

SB introduced the paper and informed members that the past eighteen months have been focused on researching and developing a road map for the introduction of BVLoS drone capability. This has included working with industry, academic and scientific partners, ascertaining the extent of progress that they, and other government departments have made in this arena.

Pete Botchett (PB) gave a short presentation and updated board members on the progress to date, the current regulatory and technical challenges outlining the next steps. From the evidence gathered, it appears no organisation is close to achieving approval from the regulator to operate BVLoS drones in unsegregated airspace. Some have demonstrated the ability to operate on a trial basis, in segregated airspace, using Temporary Danger Areas (TDA’s), but have so far not provided the regulator with the level of safety mitigations deemed necessary to advance beyond segregated airspace.

The Home Office and NPAS are keen that going forward the Futures and Innovations work forms part of a wholistic approach across NPCC, NPAS and the Home Office to work together in order to push this forward. LT advised the next steps will be looking to review the strategy and a clear and comprehensive delivery plan with milestones; delivery activity and an understanding of who is involved, who is delivering and where.

PB stated the regulator’s current roadmap for BVLoS routinely is the end of 2024 but that the capability at that point will not support the type of operations NPAS undertakes – it is likely to be limited in its scope - the challenge for the programme is determining what is safe, effective and affordable.

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the content of the report and supported the current strategic direction for developing a sustainable and affordable future means of delivery.**

# 10. NSB GOLD GROUP UPDATE

DAC Laurence Taylor (LT) reminded members that the purpose of the due diligence process was to help WMP and MPS inform their position around the viability of them becoming the lead force. LT advised that the report from Deloitte had now been circulated and draws out a number of areas for consideration. The Deloitte team stepped members through the key findings and thanked NPAS/WYP for the material supplied and for the co-operation received. Adam Smith (AS) outlined the primary focus of the review was in relation to assets of NPAS, the fleet and people within NPAS and had also looked at levels of spend and future commitments in terms of spend around leases and maintenance contracts and the operating costs of NPAS.

JR queried if the report had informed us of anything we didn’t already know. LT stated that it had formalised the issues in the due diligence process.

It was agreed that NPAS be given time to consider the report as it had not had the opportunity to respond, particularly with regard to a lot of misunderstanding around the finances; and to provide a specific response to Deloitte inviting them to consider the contents and reissue the report prior to the next NSB in April. NPAS’ response would be circulated for the attention of Board members in advance of the Board on April when it would be discussed.

Board members resolved that they were not in a position to sign off the next phase of work which would entail significant financial expenditure.

Members agreed for the Gold Group to assess how much longer the Board should be giving to the lift and shift due to not having an actual deadline, what that might look like and the consequence of that decision is that it is something else with the potential for members to consider the dissolution of the national service. The Board noted the regional meetings which were about to take place. It was agreed that consideration of the timeline and a proposal is brought back to the next board meeting.

**Resolved:**

**Members noted the update and the independent legal advice obtained from Weightmans LLP**

# 11. HOME OFFICE UPDATE

Aphra Brannan (AB) advised there was nothing further to update from the Home Office.

# 12. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Mark Reeves (MR) presented the financial position of NPAS as at 31st January 2022 which showed a current operating underspend against budget of £3.0m.

The current underspend reflects NPAS have carried a significant number of vacancies through the year for longer than anticipated due to slower than anticipated recruitment processes. Also a number of areas of spend driven by the number of hours flown are currently under spending as a result of a forecast under flying of the Forces user requirement as at the end of January of 1,243 hours.

RH raised under direct cost charging there is variable aspects and the ability of the board to give a rebate to forces due to the current operating underspend. It was agreed this would be looked at when the medium-term financial forecast is to be discussed in June and would be included as an element of the reserves strategy.

**Resolved:**

**Board members noted the report and the current financial position and estimated forecast position.**

# 13. ITEMS FOR NOTING

Board members noted:

* Meeting notes from the Local Strategic Board held on 11 January 2022
* NPAS Work Programme

# 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No AOB was raised

JC thanked members for their contribution.

**Date and time of next meeting: 6 April 2022**