Digitising Specific Category Operations (DiSCO) Stakeholder Working Group

Terms of Reference

Context

The Digitising Specific Category Operations (DiSCO) project will deliver a simplified, streamlined digital user-experience for drone operators to apply for and receive an Operational Authorisation (OA) to fly within the Specific Category. This will be achieved through the delivery of four main elements:

- **Implementation of SORA**, a new global standard process for RPAS risk assessments.

- **Expansion of the existing Remote Pilot Competence RAE scheme** to introduce a range of new qualifications covering high-complexity operations;

- **Introduction of a new RPAS Flightworthiness scheme** with the engagement of external Recognised Assessment Entities (RAEs) and RPAS manufacturers;

- **Delivery of a new technology platform to manage the end-to-end OA process**, serving all parties involved (i.e. pilots, operators, CAA, RAEs, etc);

1. Scope

The DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) is established to facilitate effective engagement, consultation, and collaboration between the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and selected industry and community representatives relating to the DiSCO project. The SWG aims to ensure that the development and implementation of the project aligns with the needs and expectations of stakeholders, that maintains a high standard of safety while promoting efficiency, and innovation in Specific Category operations of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS).

2. Objectives

The objectives of the DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group are as follows:

2.1. **Engagement**: Foster open and constructive dialogue between the CAA and external stakeholders to exchange information, share perspectives, and address concerns related to the DiSCO project.

2.2. **Consultation**: Seek input from stakeholders to gather valuable insights, expertise, and diverse viewpoints regarding the design, implementation, and impact of the DiSCO project.

2.3. **Collaboration**: Facilitate collaboration and cooperation amongst stakeholders to identify opportunities, resolve challenges, and develop practical solutions that meet the shared goals of enhancing RPAS operations within the specific category.

2.4. **Feedback and Recommendations**: Provide feedback and recommendations to the CAA on specific aspects of the DiSCO project, including the implementation of SORA, Remote Pilot Competence RAE scheme, RPAS Flightworthiness scheme, and the new technology platform delivering the end-to-end OA process.

3. Membership

3.1. Working Groups: 4 initial Working Groups will be established, these will be:

- SORA risk assessment process
- Remote Pilot Competence
- Flightworthiness
- Digital Platform.

Additional working groups may be established at any time, as required.

3.2. Composition: The DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group will comprise a diverse range of representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

a) RPAS Manufacturers/OEM's/Parts OEM's in the Specific Category, or experts with aviation (or similar) industry knowledge that is directly applicable.

b) RPAS Operators, RAE's, other service providers and professional associations or experts with aviation (or similar) industry knowledge that is directly applicable.

c) Safety experts and aviation professionals with relevant expertise in RPAS operations and regulations or experts with aviation (or similar) industry knowledge that is directly applicable.

d) Any stakeholder, who would like to participate in our DiSCO tool user experience testing programme.

3.3. Selection Process: The CAA shall invite potential stakeholders to participate in the SWG based on their expertise, experience, and ability to contribute constructively to the objectives of the group. The selection process will apply transparent selection criteria which aim for a balanced representation of stakeholders, ensuring diversity and inclusivity.

3.4. The CAA will recruit stakeholders into four specific subgroups based on the categories described earlier in the document. Due to expertise and experience, some stakeholders could be appointed to more than one subgroup.

3.5. Term of Membership: The term of membership for SWG participants will be determined by the CAA and will align with the duration of the DiSCO project, which is expected to complete by the end of FY24/25.

3.6. Members may be asked to leave their sub-group if the CAA determines they are not contributing positively to the aims of the working group, including not sharing information openly and confidentiality with the group. Members will be asked to leave their sub-group if they breach the terms of the Non-disclosure agreement signed before taking up their working group membership.

3.7. In addition to members appointed to the working group via this application process it may be necessary for the CAA to appoint additional members, e.g. because a specific skill group is not represented or a member leaves. Our intention to do so will be discussed at the working group before such a decision is made. However, the CAA's decision to appoint will be final.

3.8. This application process is only for stakeholders who work with RPAS in the Specific Category in a civil capacity. Stakeholders who work with RPAS in military, public service (such as the Police, HEMS or State operated aircraft) or similar should contact discoswg@caa.co.uk for more details on how to be a part of this process.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. CAA Responsibilities:

a) Provide relevant project updates, information, and documentation to SWG members in a timely manner.

b) Seek input and feedback from the SWG on key project deliverables, including SORA implementation, Remote Pilot Competence scheme, RPAS Flightworthiness scheme, and the new application platform.

c) Consider and address the recommendations raised by the SWG, as appropriate.

d) Collaborate with SWG members to identify potential issues, risks, and opportunities associated with the DiSCO project.

4.2. SWG Member Responsibilities:

a) Act as a representative of their respective stakeholder group and provide input based on their expertise and experience.

b) Attend and actively participate in SWG meetings, workshops, and discussions.

c) Bring own experience, ideas and documents to the working group, in certain instances, this may mean sharing ConOps and safety critical data with the CAA.

d) Provide constructive feedback, recommendations, and suggestions to enhance the DiSCO project's effectiveness, safety, and stakeholder satisfaction.

e) Collaborate with other SWG members to address common challenges and find mutually beneficial solutions.

f) Maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information in accordance with the NDA signed before taking up membership.

g) Acknowledge that there will be no payment for time spent on attending for or preparing for working group meetings or of expenses incurred in attending in person working group meetings.

5. Meeting Structure

5.1. Frequency: The SWG subgroups will meet approximately every two months. Meeting frequency will be reviewed periodically by the CAA and may be adjusted depending on project timescales and the level of stakeholder engagement required to support individual project phases.

5.2. Meeting Formats: SWG subgroup meetings may take various formats, including face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings and/or workshops, depending on the circumstances and availability of participants.

5.3. Agenda: The CAA, in consultation with SWG subgroup members, will develop the agenda for each meeting. The agenda shall reflect the key topics, objectives, and any pre-circulated materials that require discussion or decision-making.

5.4. Meeting Facilitation: SWG subgroup meetings will be facilitated by the CAA's project manager for DiSCO or a suitable nominated delegate as and when required.

6. Reporting

6.1. Progress Reports: The CAA shall provide periodic progress reports to subgroups within the SWG, outlining updates on the DiSCO project's development, milestones achieved, and any significant decisions made.

6.2. Communication Channels: The CAA shall establish appropriate communication channels to facilitate ongoing interaction and information sharing between SWG members, including email correspondence, online collaboration platforms, and dedicated project updates.

7. Review and Evaluation

7.1. Review Process: The effectiveness and impact of the DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group shall be periodically reviewed by the CAA to assess its contribution to the project's success, stakeholder satisfaction, and achievement of objectives.

7.2. Feedback and Improvements: Based on review findings, the CAA may seek feedback from SWG members to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary adjustments to enhance the SWG's effectiveness and efficiency.

7.3 the CAA may change the objectives or membership of the group, or may discontinue the group if we determine that the group is (or specific group members are) not having the intended positive impact.

8. Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended or updated as deemed necessary by the CAA to reflect changing project requirements, stakeholder needs, or other relevant factors. Amendments will be communicated to the SWG in a timely manner.

We will continue to review the membership of the group periodically to ensure the representation remains reflective of the industry and the challenges we face.