



DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group

Information pack

Introduction

The Digitising Specific Category Operations (DiSCO) project will play a key role in enabling scalable Beyond-Visual-Line-of-Sight (BVLOS) RPAS operations in the UK, transforming the operational authorisation process for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) in the Specific Category. The project comprises four key elements looking at risk assessment, pilot competence, flightworthiness, and a new online application tool.

To achieve this, the project will deliver a new globally standardised approach to RPAS risk assessment (SORA), an expanded and enhanced remote pilot competency framework, and a new flightworthiness scheme that allows operators to demonstrate the robustness of their RPAS through assessment by an external Recognised Assessment Entity (RAE). These elements will be brought together within a new online application tool that provides a streamlined and user-friendly process that supports operators in applying for and receiving operational authorisations.



Current progress

The initial deployment of the application tool will be designed to handle only PDRA-01 applications. These currently account for over 90% of all operational authorisation (OA) requests within the Specific Category, and therefore delivering this functionality first will provide the maximum benefit to users. Under the new application process, based on the declarative nature of PDRA-01, an authorisation will be granted in less than 24 hours. The new PDRA-01 application tool is planned to go-live in March 2024.

The full version of the tool will allow operators to apply for any type of operation, including complex BVLOS operations. The tool will be built around the SORA methodology and include a range of features to support operators in the use of the SORA risk assessment process. This is planned to go-live in Q1/Q2 2025.

As part of this process, the CAA is committed to ensuring that needs and expectations of stakeholders align with the development and implementation of the DiSCO project, maintaining a high standard of safety while continuing to promote efficiency and innovation in Specific Category operations of RPAS.

To do this, we are establishing the DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group to facilitate engagement, consultation, and collaboration between the CAA and industry.

Historical engagement

The CAA has already involved industry, including RAE organisations as part of an informal working group, in the drafting of the Remote Pilot Competence (RPC) Specific Category Consultation. This enabled us to incorporate the feedback and suggestions of stakeholders at an early stage of the development of that aspect of our regulatory policy.

We have taken a similar approach in our ongoing work on developing an RAE scheme for the assessment of flightworthiness. The RAE(F) scheme under consideration is proposed to allow authorised third-party organisations to assess UAS flightworthiness on behalf of the CAA. An early engagement workshop has already been held in February 2023, where a small number of potential future RAE(F) organisations and OEM manufacturers were invited to discuss and provide feedback on early development work.

Proposed working group

The proposed DISCO Stakeholder Working Group is intended to replace these early forms of engagement with a working group comprised of a fully representative group of stakeholders, established and continued on a transparent basis. The Working Group will support the CAA in the delivery of the DiSCO project and will continue until post-implementation review, at which point it is intended that the group will be dissolved.

The working group will consist of 4 sub-groups

- Design, Manufacturing and Production
- Operational Experience
- Safety/Operational Risk Management
- User Testing

Some meetings will involve the whole working group, some only one or a subset of the sub-working groups.

Examples of the issues under discussion are *the most effective way to implement SORA via an online application platform* and *how to best expand the existing Remote Pilot Competence RAE scheme to introduce a range of new qualifications covering high-complexity operations.*

Examples of the contributions we will expect participants to make include *contributing to user testing of the new SORA-based application platform* and *providing expert input on the impact of expanding existing competency schemes.*

Membership of the working group will not mean the participant has priority access to the CAA applicant process once it is launched.

Working group objectives

The DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group will work with the CAA to :



Promote engagement

The group will encourage open and constructive dialogue between the CAA and stakeholders, to exchange information, share perspectives, and address any concerns.



Be part of the consultation process

The groups' valuable insights, expertise, and diverse viewpoints will be used to ensure the design and implementation of the DiSCO project maintains a high standard of safety while continuing to promote efficiency and innovation and creates a positive impact for stakeholders and end-users.



Facilitate collaboration

The group will enable collaboration and co-operation among stakeholders, helping identify opportunities, resolve challenges, and develop practical solutions to enhancing RPAS operations within the specific category.



Provide feedback and recommendations

The group will have the opportunity to input to specific aspects of the DiSCO project, including the implementation of SORA, an updated Remote Pilot Competence scheme, a new RAE-Flightworthiness scheme, and a new online application platform.

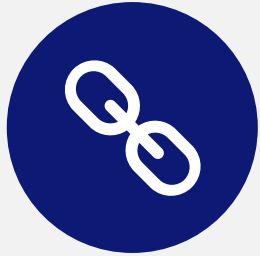


Review and evaluation

The CAA commits to providing the DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group with updates on the project's progress. This will take the form of regular meetings, electronic communications and regular progress updates.

The CAA also commits to holding periodic reviews of the SWG's objectives and its success in meeting them.

We will examine variables that include stakeholder satisfaction, achievement of objectives and areas for development. This process also involves asking SWG members for feedback to enable us to better identify areas for improvement. We may change the objectives or the membership of the group or discontinue the group if we determine the group is (or specific group members are) not having the intended positive impact.



How to apply

The DiSCO Stakeholder Working Group welcomes applications from a diverse range of representatives in four key groups:

- RPAS industry stakeholders such as manufacturers, OEM's, parts OEM's as well as potential future manufacturers
- Operators, RAEs, and other service providers already registered with the CAA as well as potential future operators
- Safety experts and aviation professionals with expertise in RPAS operations and regulations
- RPAS stakeholders with a legitimate interest in the new DiSCO tool, who are able to participate in our user experience testing programme

If you fit into one or more of these criteria, or have relevant experience from the wider aviation industry or a similar sector, then we invite you to review our extended terms of reference and make an initial application online by [joining our stakeholder working group](#). Applications open on 7 September 2023 and will close on 23:59 on 9 October 2023.

Applications will be reviewed and considered on their own merit. The CAA will inform all applicants of their outcome by 23:59 on 7 November 2023. The CAA is committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity both within our organisation and externally and encourages all stakeholders with the relevant expertise to apply to take part in this SWG.

Glossary of terms

- **CAA** - Civil Aviation Authority
- **DiSCO** - Digitising Specific Category Operations
- **OEM** – Original Equipment Manufacturer
- **RAE** – Recognised Assessment Entity
- **RAE(F)** – Recognised Assessment Entity (Flightworthiness)
- **RPAS** - Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems
- **RPC** - Remote Pilot Competence
- **SORA** – Specific Operations Risk Assessment
- **SAIL** - Specific Assurance and Integrity Level
- **SWG** - Stakeholder Working Group
- **UAS** – Unmanned Aircraft Systems