

Queenstown controlled airspace classification – final decision

The matter of the re-classification of Queenstown controlled airspace from Class D to Class C has been considered by the Director.

After review of the Queenstown Airspace Review Report conducted by Aeronautical Services Unit (CAA reference DW1305580-0), and taking into account consultation conducted with relevant parties, it has been determined that the current Class D classification for Queenstown airspace is no longer appropriate, and the classification will be changed to Class C.

Of particular note during the decision process is the growth in the number of larger, predominantly jet, passenger air transport operations into and from Queenstown over recent years. In acknowledgement of this growth, the ATC provider Airways has progressively introduced procedures in the airspace in question that are in excess of Class D requirements but do not provide the level of safety assurance that Class C airspace will deliver for the travelling public on a forward looking basis.

Also of considerable importance to this decision is an accurate assessment of the impact on general aviation activity in and around Queenstown. As a result, specific emphasis was placed on consultation with the local aviation community in an effort to provide a forum for issues relating to this airspace classification review. This included follow-up workshops conducted with relevant users on these concerns in late July and early August 2014. The outcomes of these workshops were included in the final recommendation report. The report concluded that general aviation operations will not be unduly impacted by the alteration and that appropriate cognisance has been given to both the safety and regularity of the operations in question.

Acknowledging the above factors, and taking into account the need to ensure that the growing numbers of jet operations involving regular passenger air transport services at Queenstown are provided with appropriate separation standards, the CAA position is that the change to Class C is appropriate.

A suitable transition time will be needed to allow Airways to effectively plan for, and formally implement, the changes that will be needed in liaison with all airspace users. Acknowledging this, the timeframes for formal alteration will be negotiated between Manager Aeronautical Services (CAA) and Airways but shall occur no later than November 2016 to coincide with the promulgation date of visual navigation charts update cycle.

Critical to aid the movement to Class C airspace will be timely and effective communication between CAA, all relevant stakeholders and Airways. This will be the central focus of a Class C airspace implementation plan for the region. Development of the implementation plan will include CAA Aeronautical Services and Flight Operations units, as well as the area Aviation Safety Advisor, working closely with Airways and regional airspace users to ensure the transition occurs as efficiently as possible. CAA will promulgate an initial engagement and communication timetable through the regional Aviation Safety Advisor as part of the Class C airspace transition in due course.

Sean Rogers
Manager Aeronautical Services

30 October 2015

S-D180-20-17 (DW1320495-0)