

BEYOND VISUAL LINE OF SIGHT – THE NEXT STEP FOR UA

The CAA is considering applications for the testing of unmanned aircraft flying beyond visual line of sight to help make sure such operations are safe.

Civil Aviation Rules allow for unmanned aircraft (UA) to be flown beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS). But to date, a solution has not been found to adequately manage the safety of such an operation.

Technologies are being developed for this though, because the future of UA is seen in operations out of the operator's sight.

CAA's manager of UA Clayton Hughes says the CAA wants to allow for testing of these technologies to make sure they're safe.

The University of Canterbury has its own test area, and the Authority is now considering a limited number of applications to have special use airspace designated for BVLOS trials.

Clayton says that won't result in random UA let loose in experimental flying.



// This photo (used with permission) shows an example of the type of ground control station that will be required for drone operations beyond visual line of site (BVLOS).

“There’s got to be very strict controls in place before we consider approval. And we don’t intend to approve multiple restricted areas throughout the country.

“Even when a restricted area is designated for the purposes of testing BVLOS flight, other aircraft may be able to fly in that area. They must contact the ‘administering authority’ for access approval.”

He says the restricted areas will not be permanently activated.

“They’ll be activated for testing systems of UA only – not for normal operations. Also, applicants cannot charge for the use of, or access to, that airspace.

“But they can charge for the use of ground facilities if they want to host other organisations testing UA.

“We can also put limitations on the use of the restricted airspace, for instance, how many testing flights in a week, or on what days.

“That’s part of setting up an area so the risk to other users is mitigated.

“And as part of the application, operators need to talk to the local aviation community about how the proposal could affect them.”

The CAA is required to consult with affected parties before designating airspace. This is in addition to any consultation an applicant has carried out.

As well as the airspace process, operators wanting to undertake BVLOS operations have to get approval through the Part 102 process.

That includes assessing whether the aircraft is built to design standards, maintained properly, and whether there are systems covering how they are operated.

To read a previous article in the May/June 2018 *Vector* on UA and the importance of reading NOTAMS, visit www.caa.govt.nz, “Quick Links > Publications > Vector magazine”. ➔