

North Sea Delegated Airspace: Proposal for the Introduction of Additional Controlled Airspace

Dear Colleague,

NATS has an on-going programme of airspace changes that seek to improve efficiency, enhance safety and improve the environmental performance of the ATM system. NATS also works in conjunction with our Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) partners across Europe to further these aims.

Overview of the Proposed Airspace Change

Airspace around the Norwegian continental shelf is predominantly Class G with some areas split into ADS (Automatic Dependant Surveillance) regions, surrounding collections of oil and gas platforms. This consultation regards a proposal to implement Class D CTAs within two of these extant regions, from 1500ft to FL85, in the vicinity of the Ekofisk & Balder platforms (Figure 1).

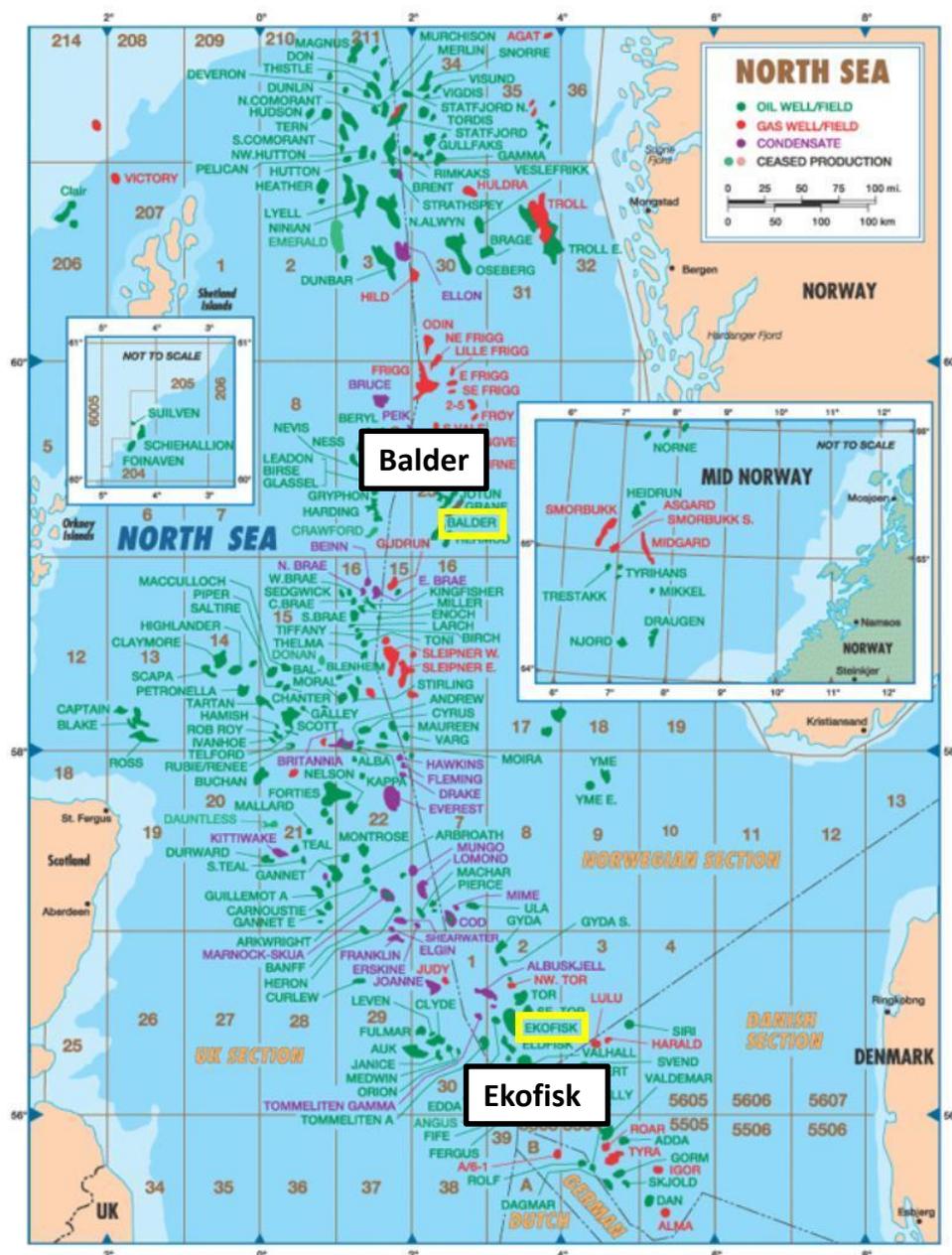


Figure 1: Oil & Gas platforms in the North Sea

Although controlled by the Norwegian ANSP Avinor, many of the platforms sit inside of the Scottish FIR but within airspace in which ATS (Air Traffic Services) has been delegated to Norway (Stavanger), as delineated by the Median Line (Figure 2). Therefore NATS is preparing and presenting this consultation and subsequent Airspace Change Proposal (ACP) on behalf of Avinor (Norway).

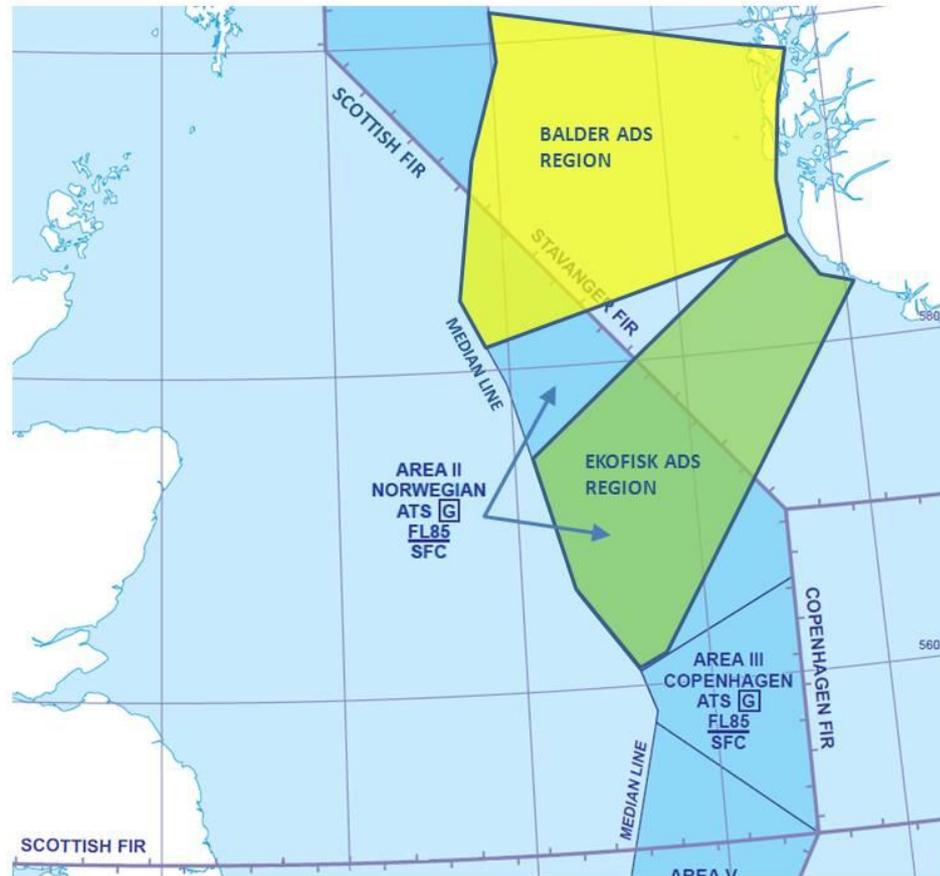


Figure 2: Delegated Airspace, Median Line & FIR Boundaries

This proposal is being put forward on safety improvement grounds alone, in light of a safety report prepared for Avinor by SINTEF¹. This report estimated that the risk of collision to helicopter operations in the area of the Norwegian Continental Shelf could be reduced by up to 40% through the introduction of volumes of controlled airspace. It estimated that the total risk for helicopter passenger transport in the area could be reduced by up to 2.5%.

It does not intend to change the behaviour, the tracks over the ground, the numbers or the types of aircraft currently using the airspace. There are no environmental detriments expected to arise from this proposal.

Impact on Airspace Users

This proposal is based on the principle that current users of the Class G ADS regions will not be disadvantaged by the introduction of Class D airspace in its place. Users should be afforded greater protection by operating within controlled airspace and through enhanced surveillance with the introduction of ADS-B technology, when compared to the current radar coverage and procedural control techniques.

¹ SINTEF Helicopter Safety Study 2 – (HSS2/1999)

Aircraft Equipage:

In order to take advantage of the surveillance methods to be used to separate aircraft in these Class D regions, users will need to be fitted with ADS-B transponders. Avinor has the backing of the Norwegian government who have mandated the fitting of ADS-B transponders to all operators who intend to fly in these regions. This includes helicopter operators to and from the platforms, fisheries protection, pipeline inspection and other regular users of the airspace.

Non ADS-B equipped users will be accommodated through existing procedural control techniques. This will include helicopter operators from the Scottish and Copenhagen FIRs, the Military, light aircraft transiting below FL85 and other ad hoc users. The primary method of navigation within the CTAs is expected to be by GPS however as a backup, two new DMEs will be co-located with the current NDBs.

Ground Equipage:

The Ekofisk CTA will retain its six existing ADS-B sensors with five more to be added to the Balder CTA to provide total coverage of both CTAs from 1000ft AMSL. A level of redundancy will be provided by overlapping coverage of ADS-B sensors as well as shore based MSSR radars (see Figure 3).

Within both proposed CTAs, duplicate Forward Radio Stations (FRS) will be added to the four existing stations; two in each CTA. An additional FRS planned for the Balder CTA will enable 100% VHF coverage and redundancy, from 500ft+.

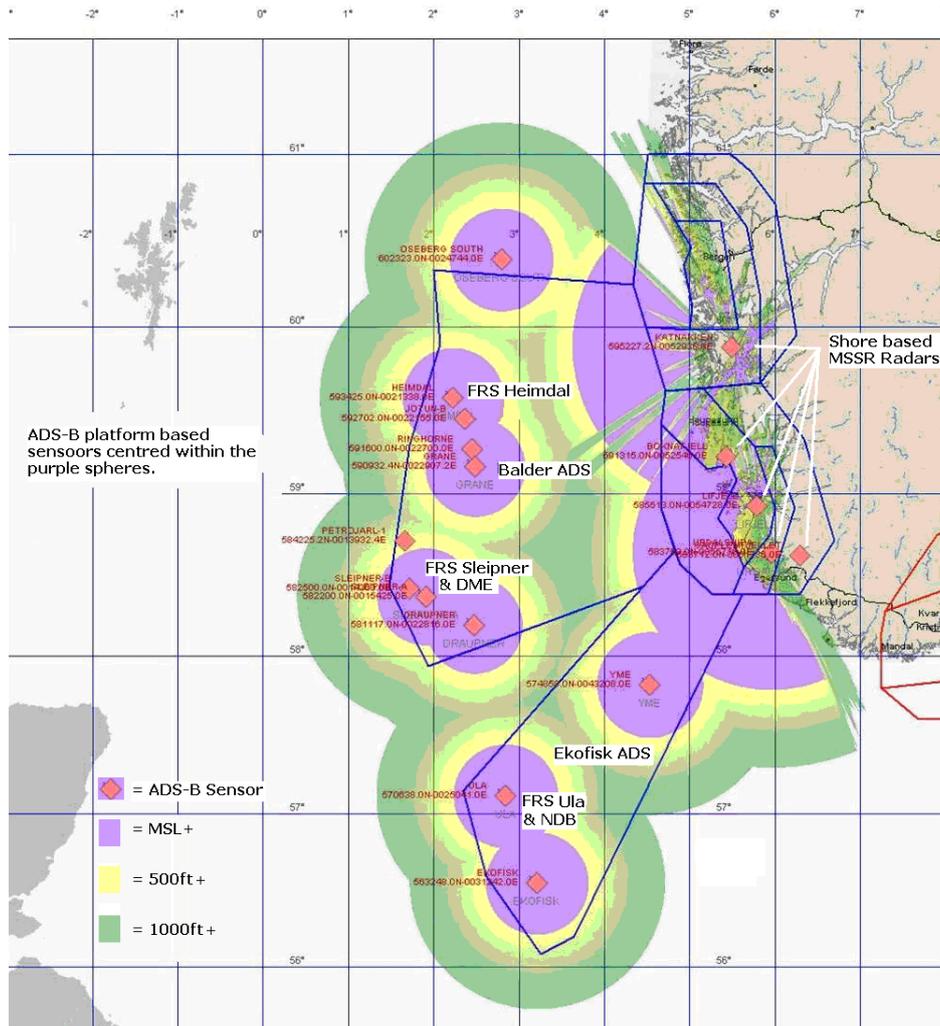


Figure 3: Platform Based ADS-B and Shore Based MSSR Surveillance Coverage

Consultation Process

The consultation is to run from 25th July 2014 to 19th September 2014 to enable Avinor to achieve an implementation date of late 2014/early 2015 for both the Ekofisk and Balder CTAs.. The CAA has agreed to this period of consultation on the basis that the MOD and the NATS radar unit at Aberdeen have been consulted prior.

We request that you consider the above proposal and reply to indicate whether your organisation supports, objects to, or has no objection to the proposal.

In the case of either **Support** or **Objection**, please provide your basis for that view, so that your opinions can be considered in the on-going development of this proposal.

Please provide your email response to: AirspaceConsultation@NATS.co.uk

Kind Regards,
NATS Airspace Consultation Team

When responding please use the text below:

Ekofisk and Balder Regions, Consultation Response:

I am responding on behalf of [organisation] and we:

- **DO NOT OBJECT TO**
- **SUPPORT [Please state reasons for your support]**
- **OBJECT TO [Please state reasons for your objection]**
(delete as applicable)

The Ekofisk and Balder Regions CAS proposal, as detailed above.