

AWSA NEWSLETTER – 6 July 2005

“ATNS AGREES TO EXPLORE SOLUTIONS TO NEW GA FEES”

The Air Traffic and Navigation Services Company (ATNS) has agreed to further explore possible solutions with respect to the new fee structure with the general aviation (GA) community, as well as put forward proposals for various matters that are of great concern to this community. These include proposed solutions to be found for the Johannesburg Special Rules Area challenge as presented by the newly published Lanseria TMA.

The willingness to further explore solutions with GA comes in support of ATNS ensuring that all users needs are met and safety is not compromised in any way.

Key members of the ATNS team led by the company's chief executive officer, Ms Wrenelle Stander, met with representatives from the general aviation (GA) community, including the Aviation Action Forum of South Africa (AAF), the Aircraft Owners' and Operators' Association (AOPA), the Commercial Aviation Association of South Africa (CAASA), the Aviation Watch Action Committee (AWAC) and the Aero Club of South Africa (AeCSA).

Items on the agenda included the latest tariff structure and increases, with its resultant effect on the general aviation sector, and the published Lanseria TMA and its effect on the pilots and operators operating within the Special Rules Area.

Ms Stander indicated that it was ATNS' intention to serve all its users to the best of its ability, and that each of their concerns were considered very important, warranting ATNS' further attention.

ATNS told delegates that it has agreed to obtain the involvement of, and facilitate further consultation and discussion with, the ATNS regulator and commissioner of civil aviation with representatives of the GA sector in South Africa as well as AASA (Airlines Association of South Africa) and IATA (International Airline Transport Association) to find solutions to the challenges that the new fee structure poses to the sector. In response, as the current fee structure is Gazetted and a legal obligation, the GA representatives would encourage their members to pay for the relevant services used. They would also invite their members to contact ATNS directly with any queries related to charges levied for services rendered, as well as charges for services that have been incorrectly billed, for the passing of credit in this instance.

The meeting between the above mentioned parties is set to be held in Johannesburg on July 26. The general aviation representative bodies have been invited to submit recommendations to this meeting for consideration.

Although discussions at the preliminary meeting dealt with problems encountered by most sectors of the general aviation committee following the implementation of the new tariff structure on April 1 this year, the main thrust of a joint submission presented by the representative bodies, was aimed at the threat the fee structure was having to flight safety in South Africa.

The submission pointed out that, quite apart from the effects the new fee structure were having on the wellbeing of the general aviation industry and the consequent sustainability thereof, safety was being compromised. The fee structure had resulted in some pilots and operators of general aviation aircraft adopting "stealth flight tactics" in order to avoid paying air traffic control fees. This dangerous policy was likely to expand unless an amicable fee level was agreed to, the meeting was told.

"Stealth flight is hardly conducive to safe flying and a situation is developing where there is a very real threat of a midair collision occurring. It is now not a case of 'if' but 'when' such an accident occurs," the submission warned.

"The problem of the fees is one that will not go away and their level is such that they will not be accepted under any circumstance," was the consensus of opinion of the GA representative bodies in the joint submission.

ATNS invites all users to contact the finance team directly should they have any queries or questions pertaining to their current statements.

SPECIAL RULES AREA

On the question of the new Lanseria TMA, ATNS announced at the meeting that the implementation - although it had been approved and published - was currently suspended until 4 August 2005, with a view to further extending the NOTAM until such time as a solution could be found.

ATNS has also agreed to ask for the re-convening of the Special Rules Area workgroup in order to address the concerns and find solutions to the problems faced in this regard, as well as put forward proposals for the refinement of the airspace, both the Lanseria TMA and its impact on the Special Rules Area.

During the last quarter of 2004, the management of Lanseria International airport enlisted the services of ATNS to re-design the VOR/DME procedure for Lanseria International airport due to the physical movement of the VOR.

In conjunction with the new procedure development, the Lanseria International airport management further requested ATNS to submit a proposal for the re-design of the airspace to ensure that all instrument procedures (including SID's and STAR's) as implemented at the airport be conducted within controlled airspace, thereby complying with all ICAO SARPS.

This was duly carried out by ATNS. During the design phase, it became clear that the effects of the new airspace would impact largely on the Special Rules Area - The change in the TMA will necessitate a change to the size and composition of the Johannesburg Special Rules Area (West) in the vicinity of Johannesburg International, Waterkloof and Lanseria International airports.

This has caused much concern due to the safety implications such a change in airspace would bring about.

OTHER ISSUES DISCUSSED

Further issues surrounding the carriage of transponders as well as the need for the replacement of the Port Elizabeth and East London primary radars were also discussed.

1) As ATNS does not have any authority to pass legislation to enforce the fitment of transponders, we encourage you to address your concerns in this matter to the CAA.

2) ATNS radar systems currently in operation at Port Elizabeth and East London airports have now exceeded their useful operational life and are difficult and expensive to maintain at the required levels of reliability and performance. This poses a material risk to maintaining service standards at the current levels for a period exceeding eighteen months. Furthermore, the specific systems in use are no longer manufactured and in the case of the East London radar, the manufacturer is no longer in existence.

As a result, ATNS is required - in terms of its mandate - to maintain existing services at these airports at the same, or a higher standard and in compliance with all applicable regulations. In so doing, ATNS has decided to proceed with the replacement of the terminal primary radar systems (initially at East London and Port Elizabeth, and thereafter at Bloemfontein) and to provide a terminal radar system at George.

The replacement of these radar systems will commence shortly and will not interfere with the normal operations as currently executed at these particular airports.

Press Release issued jointly by ATNS and GA Representatives

5 July 2005