

Proposal for new Common Frequency Zones (CFZs) in north Wellington area

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Background

There are increasing issues in the Porirua basin and Hutt Valley areas with no established protocols for frequencies to be used by pilots operating in or transiting through uncontrolled airspace in those areas. This issue has been exacerbated by sightseeing traffic along the Transmission Gully corridor, and there's no reason to believe this traffic will reduce after the new Transmission Gully Motorway opens in 2020.

At present, traffic in these areas may be communicating with Wellington Tower, Wellington Approach, Paraparaumu AFIS, FISCOM, or broadcasting to local traffic on 118.3 (Paraparaumu MBZ/Tararua CFZ) or (especially in the Upper Hutt Valley-Kaitoke airstrip area) 119.1.

Kapiti-based users, and almost certainly other pilots as well, have experienced close encounters with aircraft they haven't heard communicating on the frequencies they've been monitoring.

In response to the Transmission Gully issue, a NOTAM was issued in December 2018 (subsequently replaced by a February 2018 AIP Supplement entry) establishing a procedure that all aircraft operating in or transiting through the Transmission Gully corridor should broadcast their position and intentions on 118.3. Because the Transmission Gully development extends all the way from the Paraparaumu MBZ to the Wellington Control Zone, the NOTAM and AIP Supplement effectively created a de facto CFZ over the entire Porirua Basin.

The Hutt Valley is also a choke point, with traffic transiting between Wellington and the Wairarapa, as well as Wairarapa to Paraparaumu or Cook Strait. Additionally, there is fixed wing, helicopter and glider traffic at Kaitoke airstrip.

The need for a CFZ or CFZs to address these issues was initially presented to CAA by the Kapiti Districts Aero Club in 2017 but not progressed due to CAA workload. Subsequently, following discussions at Kapiti Airport Safety and Security User Group meetings, and with informal advice from CAA that it would look favourably on a proposal from users, we undertook to consult and develop a proposal.

The following proposal records the main issues discussed, and decisions reached, by the Kapiti User Group assembled to consider options. Representatives of the following organisations were involved in developing the proposal:

- *Civil Aviation Authority*
- *Kapiti Coast Airport Holdings Limited*
- *Kapiti Districts Aero Club*
- *Kapiti Heliworx*

- *Life Flight*
- *Otaki Aerodrome*
- *Paraparaumu Aerodrome Flight Information Service – Airways NZ*
- *SAA Wellington*
- *The Flying School*
- *Wellington Aero Club*

Off-line discussions took place with representatives of the Wellington Gliding Club (based at Papawai) and Manawatu Aviation Group, who were unable to attend our meetings.

Proposal

Two new Common Frequency Zones are proposed:

1. **KAPITI CFZ** incorporating and replacing the existing Tararua CFZ and extending south across the area between the Paraparaumu MBZ B680 and the Wellington Control Zone.

Given this CFZ's proximity to B680, and the existing practice of using the Paraparaumu frequency along the Transmission Gully corridor, we propose that 118.3 be the operative frequency for the KAPITI CFZ.

The eastern boundary of the CFZ, separating it from the proposed HUTT CFZ, extends from Kapakapanui to near Belmont Hill, essentially following the ridgelines that form a natural barrier between low-level radio traffic in the KAPITI and HUTT CFZ areas. The western boundary extends from Kapiti Island to the north-west corner of the Wellington CTR.

2. **HUTT CFZ** encompasses the Hutt Valley between the Wellington Control Zone in the Lower Hutt area, through to the Puffer and Remutaka saddles in the north and Turakirae head in the south.

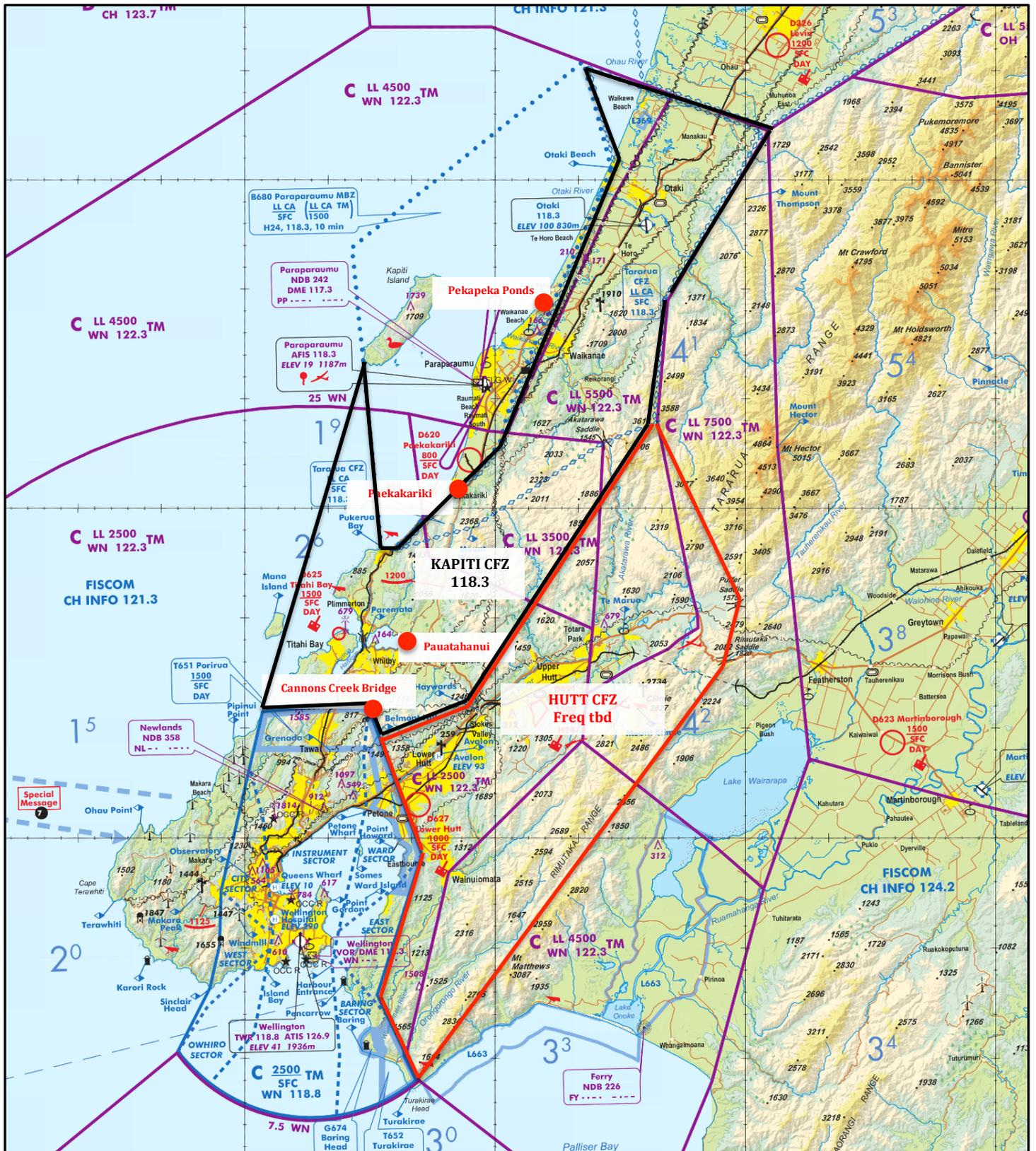
Because of the topographic separation from the proposed Kapiti CFZ, this CFZ would need to have its own frequency allocated.

The proposed KAPITI and HUTT CFZ boundaries are shown in Figure 1.

New Visual Reporting Points

Our discussions also highlighted the desirability of establishing some additional Visual Reporting Points (VRPs) to improve reporting accuracy in the Kapiti area. These are: Pekapeka Ponds, Paekakariki, Pauatahanui and Cannons Creek Bridge, and are marked on the Figure 1 chart.

Figure 1 – Proposed new Common Frequency Zones



Considerations

Although the benefits of standardising frequency use within the proposed CFZs are widely agreed, several complicating issues needed consideration before this proposal could be finalised. This is particularly the case in the Porirua Basin, where the distance and corresponding flight time for traffic transiting between the Wellington CTR and Paraparaumu MBZ is quite short.

Paraparaumu AFIS advises that, according to its records, on a busy day there are on average 14 movements per day in the Porirua Basin, with as many as 30 daily movements between December and February. On very busy days increased CFZ radio traffic on 118.3 could take up time that would otherwise be used by AFIS to pass essential traffic information to aircraft within the vicinity of the Paraparaumu Aerodrome.

On the other hand, operators regularly transiting between Wellington and Paraparaumu are opposed to having to make 2 frequency changes in the short distance between those aerodromes. In practice, pilots flying this route are already switching to either the Paraparaumu or Wellington frequency (depending on direction of travel) somewhere in the Porirua Basin and increased radio traffic from the proposed CFZ is likely to be quite small.

It is also important to note that the recently-adopted procedure for traffic operating along the Transmission Gully corridor to use 118.3 has already established a common frequency over a significant part of the Porirua Basin. The Transmission Gully motorway development extends not just through the gully section adjacent to Mt Wainui VRP, but all the way around the eastern and southern side of the harbour to Kenepuru, including a small segment of the Wellington Control Zone (within the Porirua Transit Lane T651). High terrain within T651 (upper limit 1500ft) vertically-compresses the useable airspace and reduces options for aircraft separation in this southern portion of the Transmission Gully route, adding further weight to the need for a CFZ with widely-understood communications protocols. [Although it's established practice to exclude transit lanes from CFZs, 118.3 should apply within T651 in the same way the Rangitikei frequency does within Oroua T354.]

Another suggestion was to review the AFIS area of coverage – i.e., MBZ B680. However, we believe that is beyond the scope of this proposal, and suggest that the MBZ be reviewed along with the impact of the Kapiti CFZ once it has been in operation for a period. The CFZ boundary where it abuts B680 could then be adjusted to any revised MBZ boundary.

There was a further suggestion that the Kapiti CFZ be extended further south along the west coast south of Mana Island, and perhaps even right around to the Wellington Control Zone boundary at Sinclair Head, to include areas Wellington Aero Club uses for pilot training. Because only a small proportion of the traffic operating in that area would be intending to track north towards Paraparaumu, we concluded that including it in the CFZ there would unnecessarily increase radio traffic on 118.3. Anecdotally, there is already occasional pilot confusion discerning whether a distant

transmission is referring to Ohau Point in the south or Ohau River mouth in the north.

A suggestion to extend the HUTT CFZ beyond the Hutt Valley to include Lake Wairarapa and L663 (commonly used by the Wellington Aero Club) was seriously considered. However, the south Wairarapa is intensively used by the Wellington Gliding Club operation at Papawai, with around 2200 launches per annum and 400 launches in a busy month. The glider club strongly favours the existing arrangement where they use their own chat frequency, plus 119.1 when operating close to an unattended aerodrome. After thorough consideration of options, Wellington Aero Club agreed that it was not necessary to extend the HUTT CFZ into the south Wairarapa.

Next steps

We recommend that this document be used as the basis of further consultation, to be conducted more-or-less in parallel by the Kapiti User Group, CAA and Airways. The Kapiti User Group will undertake to conduct most if not all of the external consultation - largely groups such as Massey College of Aviation, Nelson Aviation College, Wairarapa Aero Club, Wellington Gliding Club plus local agricultural aviation and helicopter operators.

Although CAA has advised that it is almost certainly too late to have a proposal approved before the 18 April cut-off for November 2019 VNC charts, we should attempt to maintain a tight timetable on our process in the interests of implementing these safety improvements as soon as practicably possible.

Timetable

Document forwarded to external stakeholders:	<i>Close of business Wed 27 Feb</i>
Feedback from external stakeholders by:	<i>Close of business Fri 8 Mar</i>
Resolve any issues and submit to CAA by:	<i>Close of business Fri 22 Mar</i>
