

The Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems in The Royal Parks

The Royal Parks Filming & Events Team Policy Statement

What is an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS)?

UAS are known by a variety of names, perhaps the most familiar of which are remote controlled aircraft or drones. Their key characteristics are that they are unmanned; they fly; and they are operated remotely. Some have cameras or other means of collecting information.

Wider Legal Framework

Aviation law requires a UAS to be seen at all times by the operator, remain below 400 ft (under 300ft beneath helicopter routes in London) and stay at least 50m from people, vehicles and structures.

If a system has a camera or is equipped to record data, it is an offence when without permission from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) a UAS is operated:

- Over or within 150 metres of any congested area or organised open assembly of more than 1000 persons.
- Within 50 metres of any vessel, vehicle, person or structure not under the control of the person in charge of the aircraft.
- During take-off or landing to be within 30 metres of any person unless they are under the control of the operator.

If a system that has the capability to acquire data and is to be used for commercial gain, CAA permission is required. It does not matter on the size of the system.

The Royal Parks Regulations

Under Park Regulations (Regulation 6) no person using the park shall –

(13) in contravention of a notice exhibited by order of the Secretary of State, or after having been requested by a constable not to do so –

(b) use a kite, or model aircraft or any mechanically propelled or operated model,

The flying of a drone becomes a prohibited act once a constable has asked a person to stop flying it or if a notice is displayed in a park stating it is a prohibited act.

Enforcement of Parks Regulations is a matter for the Metropolitan Police.

The Royal Parks Policy

The Royal Parks recognises the growing popularity of recreational UAS. However, their use can have a negative impact on park wildlife and also interfere with the safety and comfort of other park visitors. There is evidence of such devices causing alarm to animals by flying too closely.

We have also had an example of a drone rising above grazing animals and then crashing to the ground.

One area of Richmond Park, the 'Flying Field', is currently identified as suitable for the recreational use of UAS subject to pilots obeying Park Regulations and CAA requirements. However, please note that VR / FPV goggles are not allowed.

Licensed Drone Use

In some circumstances The Royal Parks may give written permission for drone use for commercial or news gathering purposes. This is in order to minimise the use of noisy helicopters which have traditionally been used for such image capturing.

Permission may be granted subject to operators abiding by the law and The Royal Parks' terms and conditions. The Royal Parks will only give permission where it does not unreasonably impact on the comfort, safety and convenience of other park users, park wildlife and environment. Security implications will also be considered.

To consider drone filming requests the following documentation will need to be submitted:

- CAA Licence
- RAMS
- Flight Plan
- Specs of drone

All the central London parks are in restricted airspace so additional approvals are needed and it varies depending on the park:

- For Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, St James's Park, Victoria Tower Gardens, The Green Park, The Regent's and Primrose Hill: [NATS APPROVAL REQUIRED](#)
- For Brompton Cemetery: [LONDON HELIPORT APPROVAL REQUIRED](#)

The cost for the use of a drone is the filming fee plus a drone fee, and the fees for drones are based on their weight and specs.

All applications for commercial filming requests will be considered by [The Royal Parks Filming Team](#) who will liaise with the relevant Park Team.

If your request is for news gathering purposes, please contact [The Royal Parks Press Office](#).

Please allow enough time for your request to be considered by the filming team, allowing a minimum of 10 working days to consider your application. We cannot guarantee permission given the limited locations considered suitable for drone use.

For more information on license fees for drone use, please see our [Filming and Photography Rate Card](#).

Police Drone Use

From time to time the Metropolitan Police will seek to launch drones in the Royal Parks for essential operational reasons. They will only do so after seeking The Royal Park's agreement. The requests will normally come direct from the newly created (Nov 2018) Metropolitan Police drone unit to The Royal Park's CEO's Office. The CEO's Office will alert the relevant park manager. The exception to this process would be when a SECO deems drone use essential as part of an event. In these circumstances, permissions may be agreed by the LSAG and the CEO's Office will be informed.