



Drone (Regulation) Bill

Introduction

The Drone (Regulation) Bill was presented to parliament on 5 September 2017 and on 27 November 2017, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Baroness Sugg) issued a statement setting out the new measures the government is taking to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of the exciting and fast-growing drones market, while putting the correct legislative framework in place to guarantee safety and security.

Core aims of the Bill

- **Balance** - safety and legality whilst keeping the UK at the forefront of the drone industry.
- **Registration** - drones over 250g will have to be registered. This means that thousands of commercial and recreational drones will need to be registered in the future.
- **Tests** - users will be required to sit special safety awareness tests, which are designed to ensure that anyone flying a drone knows the relevant safety, security and privacy regulations.
- **Database** - a new database of sensitive sites and buildings will be created. Manufacturers will be required to install “geo-fencing” sensors to prevent drones from taking off in or entering sensitive sites.
- **Enforcement** - new police powers, including the ability to seize and retain a drone’s components if there is reasonable suspicion of it having been involved in an offence..

Background

Following a consultation in 2016, the government announced in 2017 that it would be amending the law to address a number of the most widespread concerns about gaps in the existing regulation.

The government acknowledged the importance of and the rapidly increasing use of drones: the police, fire and search and rescue services all now regularly use drones in emergency situations to help save lives; drones are being used to inspect and maintain key national transport infrastructure, thereby reducing the risk of accidents and driving industry productivity and efficiency; UK drone companies are exporting their services across the world, showcasing Britain as a leader in innovative services and generating productivity and growth across a range of sectors.

To realise the full potential of this new technology, the government recognised the need to maintain our world class aviation safety record and address certain safety and privacy concerns.

Bill contents

The Bill is being prepared for publication. As it is a Private Members Bill, the contents may not be published until close to the second reading, which is scheduled to take place on 15 February 2019.

Next steps

The Bill had its first reading on 5 September 2017. The Second Reading debate in the House of Commons is scheduled for 15 February 2019. However, this may be delayed further as a result of the government’s current legislative program and Brexit.

Secondary legislation - Air Navigation (Amendment) Order 2018

The Air Navigation (Amendment) Order 2018 came into force on 30 July 2018, although many of the articles do not apply until 30 November 2019. These amendments address several of the main issues identified in response to the government’s consultation.

Key changes

30 July 2018

- Drones of all sizes will be restricted to flying no higher than 400 feet above ground level.
- Drones will be prohibited from flying within 1km of an airport or licensed aerodrome boundary.

30 November 2019

- Mandatory registration and demonstration of operator competency.
- Increased penalties.



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Contacts

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