

Granting permission for Small Unmanned Aircraft to operate within Protected Aerodrome Flight Restrictions Zones: Guidance to Protected Aerodrome Operators

Introduction

On 13 March 2019 an amendment to the Air Navigation Order (ANO) 2016 made by the United Kingdom Government came into force. This change affects small unmanned aircraft (SUA) users and protected aerodrome Air Traffic Control, Flight Information Service Unit and aerodrome operators (collectively "Aerodrome Operators" for the purpose of this document). Guidance on this change may be found within [CAP 1763](#)¹.

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to more fully inform the decision by Aerodrome Operators of protected aerodromes to grant or deny permission for small unmanned aircraft to operate within their Flight Restriction Zones (FRZs). This guidance is not intended to prevent Aerodrome Operators from denying requests for small unmanned aircraft to fly within their FRZs when there are justifiable reasons to do so.

This document summarises why the ANO was amended and how that is relevant to a decision to grant or deny permission for an unmanned aircraft to operate within an aerodrome FRZ.

Why the law changed

Following public consultation, the UK Government decided that there was merit in extending existing FRZs around protected aerodromes². The UK Government considered the extension necessary to ensure aerodromes and the people using them are fully protected from the use of SUAs which have the ability to cause significant disruption to the travelling public, concern about the security of the aerodrome, aircraft and people, and economic impact³.

The amendment to the ANO was designed to enable Aerodrome Operators to have warning and better awareness of unmanned aircraft activity close to aerodromes. The amendment was designed to maintain the ability, as before, for Aerodrome Operators to grant or deny permission for unmanned aircraft activity to occur within the FRZ around the aerodrome.

1 CAP 1763 Air Navigation Order 2018 and 2019 Amendments - Guidance for Small Unmanned Aircraft users.
2 This affects UK Licensed, EASA Licensed and Government aerodromes.
3 Explanatory Memorandum to the Air Navigation (Amendment) Order 2019.

What did the amendment change?

Full details are contained within CAP 1763 and should be read in conjunction with this document. However, for the purposes of this guidance, FRZs have been made larger and now apply to small unmanned aircraft of *any mass* and *at all times*, irrespective of aerodrome operating hours⁴.

What are my responsibilities as an Aerodrome Operator and as an unmanned aircraft pilot?

Responsibilities remain the same as before the amendment came into force on 13 March 2019. It is also still the responsibility of the unmanned aircraft pilot, like a manned aircraft pilot, to ensure that their aircraft is flown safely, does not endanger anyone or any property, and that they remain in compliance with all the conditions of all applicable rules and permissions.

What should be considered by an Aerodrome Operator before issuing permission for an unmanned aircraft to fly within their FRZ?

It is not possible for the CAA to provide an exhaustive list of relevant factors that an Aerodrome Operator should consider. The CAA considers unmanned aircraft to still be aircraft, just piloted differently and should be treated in the same way whenever possible. This means that the CAA would expect that any consideration of a request by unmanned aircraft to operate within a FRZ should be made using the same principles that are applied to requests by other user groups to operate within the same volume of airspace. e.g. crane operators and manned aviation.

Can Aerodrome Operators impose limitations on unmanned aircraft that they permit to enter their FRZs?

Yes, exactly as may be done with manned aircraft or other activity. These limitations may be, for example, geographical and/or height based. However, due to their better situational awareness only an Air Traffic Control (ATC) unit or Flight Information Service Unit (FISU) may issue permission for an unmanned aircraft to operate above 400 ft within their respective FRZs.

Can Aerodrome Operators carry out more checks on unmanned aircraft pilot competency before granting permission to fly in their FRZs?

Yes. It is up to the individual Aerodrome Operator what checks of an unmanned aircraft pilot are reasonable or necessary. Some aerodromes intend to only allow unmanned aircraft to operate above 400 ft within their FRZs if the remote pilot has an existing CAA permission or exemption.

Can an Aerodrome Operator establish a standing agreement with unmanned aircraft operators/ model aircraft clubs to permit flight within a FRZ?

Yes. This may be achieved and maintained in the same manner as existing standing agreements that an Aerodrome Operator maintains (e.g. adjacent ATC units and flying clubs). In this case the aim would be to establish a standing permission that permits small UAS flight within the FRZ subject the conditions stated by the Aerodrome Operator.

Further information

For further information, visit www.caa.co.uk/uas and dronesafe.uk

4 UAS operators and pilots are made aware of these zones via the Dronesafe website, which includes relevant aerodrome contact details.