

Tendring District Council

Drone Policy

February 2023

Introduction

Tendring District Council has introduced drone (SUSA, Small Unmanned Surveillance Aircraft) technology to enhance aerial footage for promotional, communication, operational and committee services support purposes. The Council will not use a drone for any surveillance footage.

Traditionally unmanned aircraft were only used by model aircraft enthusiasts for recreational purposes. Such aircraft are likely to be operated in a way that may pose a greater risk to the general public. Unlike manned aircraft or model aircraft used for recreational purposes, there are no established operating guidelines so operators may not be aware of the potential dangers or indeed the responsibility they have towards not endangering the public.

However, as the technology has improved, and become less costly, drones have become more popular and accessible, presenting further opportunities for their use to support operational work of the Council.

Therefore it is often necessary to take additional steps to ensure that the aircraft can be safely integrated with other airspace users - both in the air and on the ground.

In January 2010 the **Civil Aviation Authority** (CAA) introduced new regulations that require operators of small unmanned aircraft used for aerial work purposes and those equipped for data acquisition and/or surveillance to obtain permission from the CAA before commencing a flight within a congested area or in proximity to people or property.

Details of the permission and how to apply are explained in the links below.

Essentially, the person controlling a small **Unmanned Aircraft System** (UAS) is fully responsible for the safe operation of any flight, but it is important to consider whether a permission (not a licence) from the CAA is needed.

You must request permission from the CAA if you plan to:

- fly the aircraft on a commercial basis (i.e. conducting 'aerial work') or
- fly a camera/surveillance fitted aircraft within congested areas or closer (than the distances listed within Article 167) to people or properties (vehicles, vessels or structures) that are not under your control

Permission is not required if:

- the aircraft will not be flown close to people or properties, and you will not get 'valuable consideration'

(i.e. payment) from the flight, then a permission is not needed;

Permission is also not required for 'practice' or demonstration flights. However, the other requirements of Articles 166 and 167 must still be complied with, and it must also be ensured that no one is endangered while flying the aircraft.

The regulations are intended to protect people and / or properties that are not involved in the activity. They are also aimed at being as 'light touch' and proportionate as possible, so there is a great deal that can be done (especially for private or recreational flights) without the need to approach the CAA at all.

Drone operations

Tendring District Council uses SUSA technology for promotional, communication and committee services support purposes, as well as operational use (excluding surveillance). The Council will only use named Officers with responsibility for aerial footage. These Officers will be trained and keep an up to date log of all flights undertaken.

Tendring District Council will operate a SUSA for promotional, commercial, operational and committee services support purposes in accordance to Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) policies and details set out in the TDC flight operations manual.

TDC flight operations manual will be updated frequently as new legislation regarding aerial photography come into force. Updated documents will be signed by the accountable manager and SUAS operator and sent to the CAA for approval.

A set structure for all SUSA related enquiries will be enforced:

Accountable manager:	Communications Manager
Operations Manager:	Communications Manager / Communications Assistant

Maintenance Technician:	Communications Assistant
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Usage

Tendring District Council will only use the drone for communications, marketing, operational and committee support services purposes. Use for surveillance is strictly not permitted.

If the drone is requested for use supporting enforcement, then it must meet the appropriate requirements of the relevant enforcement policy, and this assessment recorded.

Permissions

Tendring District Council holds permission from the CAA, Permission for Commercial Operations and operators will hold personal licences to operate from the CAA on behalf of Tendring District Council.

Tendring District Council will only operate in accordance with these permissions, and will seek to annually renew these at the appropriate time, subject to agreement from senior management team.

Data Protection

The SUSA has the capability of capturing HD video and images, the data of which will be handled, processed and retained in accordance with TDC's GDPR arrangements and Data Protection policies.

Appropriate land owners and subject photographed permissions will be sought prior to any flights taking place.

Partnership working

The SUSA will give Tendring District Council the scope of offering organisations it partners with the opportunity to utilise the resource provided it falls within the same scope as identified within this policy.

References

Air Navigation: The Order and the Regulations CAP 393 & 1763
Air Navigation Order 2020

www.caa.co.uk