

Unmanned Aircraft Systems Light UAS Operator Certificate Call for Interest

CAP 3221

Published by the Civil Aviation Authority 2026

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First published February 2026

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The latest version of this document is available in electronic format at: www.caa.co.uk/CAP3221

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Context

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) intends to run a 12-month trial of a Light UAS Operator Certificate (LUC) framework for UAS operators. The LUC concept provides an alternative pathway for UAS operations in the Specific Category, by granting privileges based on organisational competence rather than requiring case-by-case approvals by the CAA.

This trial will allow the CAA to evaluate whether such an approach can sustainably maintain safety and compliance while enabling greater operational flexibility. The policy concept document can be found on our website at: [CAP3222](#)

Based on the process described in this document, the CAA plans to trial the LUC concept over a 12-month period with a small number of organisations who respond to this call for input, are deemed suitable to participate in the trial and apply successfully for an LUC. For the duration of the trial and until further notice, there will be no routine application service for an LUC in the UK.

Objectives of the Trial

The LUC trial aims to provide evidence and insights that will inform future regulatory policy. Specifically, we want to determine:

- Whether the LUC pathway should be adopted more widely as a viable alternative to case-by-case approvals for UAS operations.
- What refinements are needed in policy, oversight, and guidance to facilitate a practical, safe, and scalable LUC framework in the UK.
- How lessons learned during the trial should be integrated into future policy development, including alignment with UK SORA (Specific Operations Risk Assessment) methodology for broader implementation.

UK SORA already allows for flexibility, such as the ability to operate at new sites. UAS Operators can already make use of Operational Authorisations that allow for certain changes to the operation, such as the addition of new operating sites. We would like to explore how organisations may operate under an LUC in the UK, and which parts of the UAS industry this is likely to enable most.

We believe there are likely to be specific types of organisation who may benefit most from the LUC, such as those operating a blended fleet of both crewed aircraft and UAS, and possibly those regularly facilitating flights from different Operators, such as Test and Evaluation sites or those operators routinely engaging in research and development activity (as long as they meet the requirements of [UK Regulation \(EU\) 2019/947, Part C](#)).

The LUC requires a significant threshold of evidence, and expertise, over and above that required for an OA, and will enable a greater degree of flexibility and autonomy in decision making following once issued.

Trial entry process and assessment stages

To take part in the LUC trial, organisations must complete two stages:

Stage 1 – Trial candidate selection

Organisations who are interested in taking part in the trial should submit an application through [Light UAS Operator Certificate Trial - Civil Aviation Authority - Citizen Space](#) during the application window closing on 26 March 2026, outlining how they meet the criteria set out in this document.

Once this window has closed, the CAA will consider all applications and select those it deems initially suitable for participation in the trial to proceed to LUC assessment.

Stage 2 – LUC assessment

Organisations considered initially suitable will be invited by the CAA to apply for an LUC, with further guidance to be provided at this stage of the application. Organisations deemed initially suitable by the CAA are not guaranteed to be successful in applying for an LUC.

Applications will be assessed in accordance with [UK Regulation \(EU\) 2019/947, Part C](#). Applicants considered by the CAA to meet the requirements of Part C will be asked to agree to the terms of the LUC trial and, pending agreement, be granted privileges of an LUC as determined by the CAA. If an organisation is unable to meet the requirements of Part C, they will not be invited to participate in the trial.

This selection process has been designed to be fair, transparent, and based on capability and readiness.

What are we looking for?

We are seeking organisations that can demonstrate their ability to manage the risk of UAS operations. In particular, we welcome applications from organisations who exhibit the following desirable attributes:

- Hold an approved and current Air Operator Certificate (AOC).
- Be able to demonstrate identification and mitigation of UAS-specific risks within their Safety Management System (SMS).
- Demonstrate sufficient competence of personnel within the organisation to manage the entire UAS operation, including training, maintenance, compliance, and crew competence.
- Hold a current Operational Authorisation (OA) for UAS operations or have held an OA within the previous 12 months.

We will take into account all relevant factors when considering applications. While meeting more of the attributes listed above may strengthen your application, you are encouraged to apply even if you do not meet all of them. We are looking to select less than five operators for this trial, but the exact number of operators participating may differ according to the suitability of applications received.

What will you get from us?

Organisations who successful at both stages of assessment will receive, and be subject to:

- A Light UAS Operator Certificate valid for 12 months, at the discretion of the CAA.
- Defined privileges enabling certain UAS operations without case-by-case authorisation.
- Proportionate oversight from the CAA, including review meetings and performance monitoring.

Please note that there is no guarantee of renewal beyond the trial period and until further notice. Future implementation of an LUC framework will depend on trial outcomes and may differ from the framework implemented for the trail period.

How to apply

To apply, please register your interest online via [Light UAS Operator Certificate Trial - Civil Aviation Authority - Citizen Space](#) by Thursday 26 March. You will need to provide:

- Organisation name and primary contact details (including email and phone number).
- Confirmation of whether you currently hold an approved and valid AOC. If so, please include certificate details.
- An explanation of how your SMS identifies and mitigates UAS-specific risk, including a summary of processes, risk assessments, and any recent safety performance data.
- A description of how your organisation manages the entire UAS operation, including training, maintenance, compliance monitoring, and crew competence.
- Details of key personnel and their qualifications.
- Confirmation of whether you hold a current OA for UAS operations or have held one within the previous 12 months. If so, please include the authorisation reference and scope of operations.
- Any further information considered relevant to your application, for example if you are a test and evaluation site.

The information provided will be used to score applications. The candidates deemed most suitable will be invited to apply for an LUC.

All information provided will be kept confidential; for more details, please refer to our privacy notice at our [website](#).